

## ON THE SUZDAL INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

BY RUGGERO GILIAREVSKII

Dictionary define a *colloquium* as a scientific meeting with discussion of reports on a predetermined theme. In strict conformity with this definition, our meeting was not a colloquium as reports were not discussed and the theme was so broad that it is difficult to label it *determined*. Neither could our gathering be named a *symposium*, since it had no consultative character; and not a *conference*, for the limited number of participants (about thirty). So *colloquium* is nevertheless the most adequate name for this international meeting of Russian scientists in the fields of information science and the sociology of science with experts and teachers of professional communication from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Poland, and the U.S.

The organization of this meeting, from both the scientific and the cultural sides, was top-level and deserves all praise. I express gratitude to the coconveners of the colloquium: Russian Scientific and Technical A. S. Popov Society and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and especially to the first-hand organizers, cochairmen *Henrich Lantsberg* and *Lisa Moretto*. They managed to overcome the main difficulty, consisting that in Russia *professional communication* is not recognized either as a scientific or an educational discipline, and not as a profession. At the same time, many experts in different areas of the national economy are engaged in this activity but are not professionally unified in the country and are not using the wide experience of foreign colleagues.

I see the great value of this meeting in comprehension of the necessity to recog-

nize professional communication not only in science but also in other areas of creative activity and to establish its borders with journalism, advertising, public relations, information science, etc. The Russian and



K. Baranich

*Henrich Lantsberg signing the PCS-Popov Society agreement*

the foreign sides were represented differently. Grown-wise-with-years professors acted from our side, younger experts and teachers from the foreign side. And the former learned from the latter. We learned how to present at international meetings: by visual demonstration (with computer-prepared slides), briefly, convincingly, and emotionally. We learned how to teach children and adults the methods and modes of professional communication (interestingly

*(continued on page 18)*

### I N S I D E

- 2 From the Editor
- 3 President's Column
- 5 PCS Awards for 2001
- 7 How to Create a Portfolio
- 9 Tools of the Trade
- 10 Net Notes
- 12 Good Intent, Poor Outcome
- 13 IPCC 2002 Call for Papers
- 14 Ukraine: A Perspective
- 16 Suzdal Reflections
- 19 Eastern Presentation Highlights
- 21 Tech Comm in Russia
- 23 I Want To Go Back
- 25 Dreams of the Heart

FROM THE EDITOR



RUDY JOENK

Coincidentally, just about the time Jaime Hutchinson's article about the South Pole was reaching your mailbox, I viewed a traveling Antarctica exhibit at the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science in Davenport, Iowa. There, a museum replica of a South Pole signpost includes a new pointer: Davenport, 9176 miles.

IPCC 01 took place too late for coverage in this issue so reports and pictures will be in the January/February 2002 *Newsletter*.

However, our August colloquium in Suzdal, Russia, with the Popov Society is well covered with reflections and pictures in this issue. I hereby grant **INSTANT FAME**, with my thanks, to the volunteer reporters and photographers who supplied this material.

**AdCom**

We are very grateful to the many people outside the U.S. who sent messages of concern following the terrorist attacks on 11 September.

AdCom meetings in 2002 were determined at the October meeting, too late for this *Newsletter*; check the Web site (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/>) for dates. Our site had more than 13 000 page views from nearly 4800 visitors during August.

**Potpourri**

*From our columnist Jean-luc Doumont on a recent trip to Syria:*

Beautiful Syria is a most hospitable country; locals are prompt to help out the infrequent tourist, using whatever French or English they know. When it comes to writ-

ing English in an alphabet very different from their native one, shop tenants and restaurant owners who do not know better tend to transcribe words rather phonetically, sometimes with amusing results. It took me a while to recognize such words as "dizel" (diesel), "flawors" (flowers), and "jooses" (juices).

Of course, these misspellings would have been singled out by any computerized spelling checker. Others would not, such as the use of "meet" instead of "meat" on a menu. My three favorites in this category, from restaurant menus in Damascus and Hama, are "milk-check," "lamb shops," and, especially, "praise list" as the title of a price list.

New words in the 2001 edition of *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* include *bazillion*, meaning a very large, indeterminate number; *cybersquatting*, the registering of Internet domain names to be sold for profit; and *functional food*, which is good for you. *Speech* is now "any public form of expression," including "visual depictions." Associated Press.

"*Grey goo* is a wonderful and totally imaginary feature of some dystopian sci-fi future in which nanotechnology runs riot and microscopic earth-munching machines escape from a laboratory to eat the world out from under our feet." The *Guardian*, Manchester, England. *Scientific American* (September) assures us, however, that "For the foreseeable future, we have nothing to fear from gray goo."

*Capitalization*: Process by which lowercase letters become uppercase letters. Compare: *Large-cap*—Companies that use large letters in their logos, e.g., GM; *Small-cap*—

(continued on page 8)

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



GEORGE HAYHOE

## REFLECTIONS AND THANK-YOUS

In some ways, it seems almost like yesterday that I was elected president of the IEEE Professional Communication Society. The past two years have certainly challenged us all, but they've also presented us with many opportunities for growth and service. I'd like to look back at the events of those years and thank those who have given of themselves to make our society an even better organization.

**Strategic Plan**

In developing, adopting, and beginning to execute a five-year strategic plan, PCS has taken a significant step toward better serving its members and preparing for the future. The plan (described in detail in the May/June 2000 *Newsletter* and on our Web site at <http://www.ieeepcs.org/plan.htm>) comprises seven strategies that focus on branding, aligning products and services with members needs, promoting those products and services both within and outside the Institute, and adopting more businesslike operations.

We have already celebrated some successes in implementing this plan. We adopted a new visual identity more than a year ago, we began incorporating it into our publications, and we redesigned our brochure and Web site to feature our new visual identity. We have also identified two new products, an e-publication and an e-learning program, that will debut next year. And we are working on surveys that will help us learn more about why people join PCS and how well the society meets their professional needs. The AdCom spent half a day at its October meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, gauging our progress in implementing the plan and making needed adjustments.

I applaud the efforts of every member of the AdCom and our other volunteers for their efforts to create and begin executing this plan.

**Membership**

One of the greatest challenges we faced as an organization in the last half of the

1990s was a 30 percent decline in our membership. Once a society with more than 2500 members, PCS saw its roll fall below 1700 at one point last year.

To counter this decline, membership chair Marj Davis and publicity and marketing chairs Nancy Coppola (2000) and Sherry Steward (2001) designed an aggressive program to recruit new members both inside and outside IEEE and to retain the members we already have. With the help of Bill Kehoe and IEEE staff, Marj sent letters to all PCS members before membership renewal both last year and this year, urging us to renew our membership in the society. They also sent letters to IEEE members with technical interest profile (TIP) codes shared by PCS members describing what our society has to offer. In addition, our new society brochure, advertisements in the Society for Technical Communication (STC) journal, and the presence of our booth and enthusiastic members at a number of conferences have helped generate interest in PCS among full-time communicators.

Thanks to all these efforts and the dedication of these volunteers, the decline in membership has been reversed, and 2001 may mark the first year in recent memory when membership in December actually exceeds the number on the roll the preceding January.

**Governance**

In what I believe was a very significant move at our AdCom meeting in Santa Fe last month, the society approved an amendment to our bylaws that allows for direct election of part of the AdCom by our membership. This was one of the suggestions made by the IEEE Technical Activities Board's society review committee in their five-year review of PCS in 2000. As it is implemented over the next three years, this governance change should make the AdCom more diverse and more responsive to the needs of the membership, and it may help us increase the number of active volunteers.

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*The decline in membership has been reversed.*

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**Publications and Conferences**

The two most visible elements of PCS are our publications and our conferences. They have also been our strongest areas of endeavor.

For the fourth year, Kim Campbell has continued her excellent work as editor of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*. In addition to an award-winning joint issue with the STC journal, she will have published seven other issues during my term as president, adding significantly to the body of knowledge on professional and technical communication. The final issue of 2001 will be published in the next few weeks.

As he has since late 1997, Rudy Joenk does a masterful job as editor of our *Newsletter*. He has steadily increased the quality of this publication as well as its page count by recruiting new columnists and offering “instant fame” to those who write about our annual conference or contribute articles on other topics. The content is both interesting and valuable, especially to the professional engineers among our members. A graphic updating of the *Newsletter*, its first in seven years, will debut in January.

We also sponsored two IEEE Press books: Herbert L. Hirsch’s *The Essence of Technical Communication for Engineers* (2000) and the third edition of Ron Blicq and Lisa Moretto’s *Writing Reports to Get Results* (2001). I appreciate the efforts of Gene Hoffnagle, who has served as the society liaison to the IEEE Press, in getting these books published under PCS sponsorship.

As for conferences, the past two years have been busy ones for our society. Last year we not only held our first joint conference with the Association for Computing Machinery’s Special Interest Group on Systems Documentation (ACM SIGDOC), but we also cosponsored Forum 2000 with other member societies of the International Council for Technical Communication (INTECOM).

I applaud the efforts of Beth Moeller (general cochair), Bernadette Longo (program comanager), and Steve Robinson (treasurer), as well as the many other PCS and SIGDOC volunteers who helped

to make IPCC/SIGDOC 2000 such a success. And I’m especially grateful to Ron Blicq and Lisa Moretto, along with their INTECOM colleagues from STC and the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators, for helping make Forum 2000 in London such a success.

During August 2001, PCS cosponsored a colloquium in Suzdal, Russia, with the professional communication section of the Russian Popov Society. Henrich Lantsberg and Lisa Moretto were instrumental in making the colloquium such a memorable and professionally meaningful event for more than two dozen engineers and professional communicators from Russia and the West. And just a few weeks ago we held IPCC 01 in Santa Fe under the able guidance of general chair Joe Chew and program chair Roger Grice.

**Other Thank-yous**

Many other people have contributed to making the last two years significant for our society, and I’d like to acknowledge their roles briefly.

- Muriel Zimmerman chaired our awards committee, which not only renamed the Best Paper award in honor of Rudy Joenk but also established a new education award in honor of Ron Blicq.
- Luke Maki chaired the electronic information committee, served on the IEEE USA information technology committee, and obtained hosting services from the Boeing Company for our first electronic AdCom meeting in January 2001.
- Ed Clark served as PCS secretary, recording the decisions at AdCom meetings, and also served as membership database coordinator.
- Bill Kehoe (2000) and Steve Robinson (2001) served as PCS treasurer, helping significantly to coordinate our budgeting and fiscal oversight with IEEE headquarters.
- Tom van Loon in 2000 became the first PCS AdCom member from outside North America and has begun the task of addressing how PCS can best serve its large number of members in regions 8, 9, and 10.

*(continued on page 24)*

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*Already some successes  
in implementing  
our strategic plan*

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# PCS AWARDS FOR 2001

By Muriel Zimmerman

At IPCC 01 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on 25 October 2001, the Professional Communication Society presented four awards: the Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for outstanding contributions to the field of technical communication; the Emily K. Schlesinger Award for outstanding service to the Professional Communication Society; the first Ronald S. Blicq Award for distinguished contributions to technical communication education; and the newly named Rudolph J. Joenk, Jr. Award for outstanding paper published in the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* the previous year. The awardees for 2001 are Janice C. Redish, William P. Kehoe, Ann A. Laster, and Ann S. Jennings, respectively.

for *Interface Design* (with JoAnn Hackos, John Wiley & Sons, 1998). In addition, Ginny serves on the editorial board of several journals and has published numerous papers and book chapters on various aspects of writing, document design, and usability.

Ginny is a member of ACM SIGCHI and SIGDOC, the IEEE Professional Communication Society, the Society for Technical Communication, and the Usability Professionals Association. In 1995 SIGDOC honored Ginny with its Rigo award, given annually to an individual for significant contributions to the profession. In 1998 she was elected a Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication.



Janice C. (Ginny) Redish

**Goldsmith Award 2001:  
Janice C. Redish**

Dr. Janice C. (Ginny) Redish is an independent consultant helping companies solve problems in technical communication and usability. During the past 20 years

she has established a reputation as one of the most important figures in the field of professional and technical communication. Ginny is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and holds a Ph.D. degree in Linguistics from Harvard University. In 1979 she founded the Document Design Center at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C., which she directed for 13 years. Since 1992 Ginny has been a consultant in usability and documentation. Her clients include American Airlines, Boeing, DuPont, IBM, NASA, Nokia, Xerox, and many federal and state agencies.

Her publications are among the most significant in our field. She has coauthored two books: *A Practical Guide to Usability Testing* (with Joseph Dumas, Intellect Ltd., rev. ed. 1999) and *User and Task Analysis*

**Schlesinger Award 2001:  
William P. Kehoe**

William P. (Bill) Kehoe served as PCS treasurer from 1986 through 2000, devoting his energy to getting society finances in order and increasing reserves. As treasurer of 10 society conferences (including IPCC



William P. (Bill) Kehoe

01 in Santa Fe, New Mexico), he helped ensure that the society earned the largest possible surplus from each conference, one of our most important income-producing activities.

Through all of his service to PCS, Bill has been constant in his devotion to the society and vigilant in his efforts to ensure financial stability.

Bill has an M.B.A. degree from George Washington University, and he is a retired senior staff member at The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland, where he was in charge of administrative, manpower, and fiscal matters for the aeronautics department. Bill has been a member of PCS for 20

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*Four outstanding  
award recipients...*

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years and an AdCom member for 16 of those years.

In 1992 Bill received the Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for his contributions to improving the quality of engineering communication. At IPCC/SIGDOC 2000 he was awarded a Third Millennium Medal for his contributions to the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers.

**Blicq Award 2001: Ann A. Laster**

Ann A. Laster, first winner of the Ronald S. Blicq Award for distinguished contributions to technical communication education, taught technical writing at Hinds



*Ann A. Laster*

Community College in Raymond, Mississippi, for 30 years. During that time she wrote (with colleague Nell Ann Pickett) two groundbreaking texts for two-year-college students: *Technical English*, now in its 8th edition, and *Occupational English*, now in its 4th edition.

In 1981 Ann was a founding member of the Institute in Technical Communication (ITC), an annual one-week institute established to help two-year-college teachers become effective teachers of technical communication. She became director of ITC and remained in that position for 20 years. During that time, the Institute served over 700 participants from universities, two-year colleges, and high schools, representing 35 states and Canada. Institute graduates have gone on to become some of the finest teachers of technical communication in North America.

Ann earned a B.A. degree in English from Mississippi College and an M.A. degree from the University of Mississippi. In 1990 she received the Two-Year-College English Association's Gregory Cowan Award for Excellence in the Teaching of English. In 1998 she was named Kappa Kappa Iota

State's Distinguished Educator; and in the same year she was named Outstanding Academic Faculty Member at Hinds Community College.



*Ann S. Jennings*

**Joenk Award 2001:  
Ann S. Jennings**

The first winner of the Rudolph J. Joenk, Jr. Award for Best Paper in the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* is Dr. Ann S. Jennings,

associate professor of professional writing at the University of Houston–Downtown, Houston, Texas. Dr. Jennings' award-winning article, "Employed Students: Ethical and Legal Issues in the Technical Communication Classroom," appeared in vol. 43, no. 4, pp. 368-385, December 2000, of the *Transactions*. The Editorial Advisory Committee was impressed by the significance of the topic addressed, the originality of approach, the combination of theory and application through case studies, and the thoroughness of coverage reflected in the excellent reference section. Dr. Jennings' article, the first to win the Joenk Award, is the ninth to win a PCS best paper award.

Dr. Jennings earned her B.A. degree in English from the University of Louisiana and M.A. degree in speech and Ph.D. degree in humanities from Florida State University. Since 1994 she has been a faculty member at the University of Houston–Downtown, where her teaching includes courses in science writing, technical editing, and desktop publishing. In addition to her academic work, Dr. Jennings has had extensive experience in industry, including training and consulting for clients in the fields of engineering, oil and gas, securities, banking, law, and medicine.

*Muriel Zimmerman is awards chair for PCS and a senior lecturer in technical communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

*...two industrial practitioners, two teaching professionals*

## HOW TO CREATE A PORTFOLIO

BY MIKI MAGYAR

If you're just starting out as a technical writer and have to ask about what employers expect to find in a portfolio, or if you've been working in companies where everything is highly proprietary, you probably don't have a lot of nifty stuff stockpiled. But you can still create a winning portfolio. Remember, the function of the portfolio is to give you something to point to while you talk to a prospective employer about what you can do and how you do it.

**Make sure the portfolio itself is good-looking.** You don't need a leather one or lots of bucks. Even a plain vanilla three-ring binder can look good with a little creative effort. Use some nice color-border paper and make a well designed cover. Make several, depending on the kinds of jobs you might apply for. A cover for a marketing job, for example, could have the glitz that would be inappropriate for a software documentation job.



**Design a one-page flyer for your business** or make a mission statement or something that gives the *TV Guide* outline of who you are and what you do. Make that the first page. You may also want to hand out copies of this when you leave. You can have different versions depending on what kind of work you're applying for.

**Use plastic slipsheets for each two-page spread.** On the left side put the "before" example and, on the right, the "after" version. You can change the pages depending on the job you're applying for. Make sure you collect good examples from every project. Even if the material is confidential, most employers will negotiate on letting you get individual pages that demonstrate your skills. I have forms I've redesigned, spec sheets that are now comprehensible,

engineers' procedures, programmers' cryptic notes, and so on.

If you've done any online help, print out a couple of topics and include them. You might want to include the HTML code, if you've done that. And it doesn't all have to be from work, either. You can take stuff that comes in the mail and redo it. Hey, rewrite the instructions for your VCR!

If you have writing samples from your current job or if you have anything that shows your technical writing ability, you can start building your portfolio with those. If you don't have a collection of articles, papers, etc., all is not lost. Start now to create examples that highlight the skills you want to use in your next job. Write a short article for publication in one of the professional journals, SIG newsletters, or magazines. They usually welcome new material.

Offer to do some volunteer writing for nonprofits, a local school, your homeowner's association—whatever you care about. The interviewer will probably not read any of it, but it demonstrates your range. College research papers are usually not appropriate unless the subject is relevant to the job you're applying for.

If you know you want to work in a particular field, go to the technical or professional journals in that field, select a recent article, and write it up for a popular audience. For example, a *Scientific American* article could be rewritten for a newspaper. This demonstrates your ability to translate from technical to nontechnical, and also your writing skills.

In the back of my portfolio I have pocket pages to hold such things as papers I've presented, sections from a tutorial, articles in newsletters, and so on. I have copies of letters of recommendation in the last pocket, along with a few annotated sample pages and my résumé for handouts. Considering how transient even the most "permanent" jobs are, I recommend you get a letter from everyone you can, including subject matter experts.

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*Something to point to  
...about what you can  
do and how you do it.*

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Most interviewers seem impressed with this kind of portfolio. It gives you a chance to show that you understand the process and that you actually did the work yourself, and you can use it to talk about what made the job interesting, or difficult, or satisfying. I've used this portfolio as a model when teaching technical writing and the feedback from students is that it works.

Good luck!

*The author is manager of technical publications at Spatial Corp. in Boulder, Colorado. She has been documenting hardware, software, and systems and teaching technical communication for more than 15 years. As Communications Support Services, a consulting service, she offers training for technical professionals in communication skills and project management, in addition to contract writing and editing; mikim@iecc.org.*

## FROM THE EDITOR

*(continued from page 2)*

Companies that use all lowercase letters in their logos, e.g., amazon.com. Christopher Buckley in *The New Yorker*.

**ArtLex** at <http://www.artlex.com> is a dictionary of more than 3100 terms used in visual culture, along with thousands of images, pronunciation notes, great quotations, and cross-references. The entries range across history as well as disciplines including, for example, hieroglyphs and pixels. Shelly Freierman in *The Denver Post*.

New use of **404**, the World Wide Web error message meaning "URL Not Found": someone who is clueless. Rob Reuteman in the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Haiku error messages at <http://mistupid.com>:

The Web site you seek  
Cannot be located, but  
Countless more exist.

Chaos reigns within.  
Reflect, repent, and reboot.  
Order shall return.

With searching comes loss  
And the presence of absence:  
"My Novel" not found.

### Information for Authors

One thousand words makes a nice page-and-a-half article, though longer and shorter articles may be appropriate. Proposals for periodic columns are also welcome.

If you use a wp program, **keep your formatting simple**; multiple fonts and sizes, customized paragraphing and line spacing, personalized styles, etc. have to be filtered out before being recoded in *Newsletter* style. Headers, footers, and tables lead the casualty list. **Embed only enough specialized formatting and highlighting (bold-face, italics, bullets) to show me your preferences.**

If you borrow text—more than a fair-use sentence or two—from previously published material, you are responsible for obtaining written permission for its use. Ditto for graphics. Always give credit to the author or artist.

The *Newsletter* issues on our Web site can be used as examples (<http://www.ieccpcs.org/pub.html>).

I prefer to receive articles by e-mail; most WordPerfect, Word, RTF (rich text format), and ASCII files are acceptable. My addresses are in the boilerplate at the bottom of page 2.

### Deadlines

The 15th day of each odd-numbered month is the deadline for publication in the succeeding odd-numbered month. For example, the deadline is 15 January 2002 for the March/April issue, 15 March for the May/June issue, etc. You won't be far off (and never late) if you observe the Ides of January, March, May, and so on.

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*Check our web site  
<http://www.ieccpcs.org/>  
for AdCom meeting  
dates in 2002 and  
conference information.*

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE



PETER REIMOLD AND  
CHERYL REIMOLD

# BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM

## Part 1: Focusing on Other People's Needs

In this series, we will examine cases in which people in business used communication skills to solve, rather than add to, problems.

### An Unnatural Perspective

The first skill in this critical endeavor is *focusing on other people's needs*. Like most basic communication skills, this one sounds easy; however, it is extraordinarily difficult. When you're facing an urgent problem and you know—or think you know—the best way to solve it, the automatic response is to tell people to do just that. Stopping to consider their needs is usually the last thing you want to do. People are not automations, however. As you've probably noticed, they don't jump and switch gears just because you tell them to. If you ignore their needs, they grumble, they object, and, even if you have the power to force them to do what you say, regardless, they don't put their hearts into it.

### A Case of Forgetting About People's Needs

Take the case of one manager facing a crisis. He was a mill manager whom we were coaching on presentation skills. The presentation he was about to give his people concerned serious competition. If they didn't find a way to meet more customer needs at lower cost, he told us, the mill could well be shut down.

We asked him what he planned to tell them in his presentation.

"I've got to light some fires!" he said. "I'll tell them that if we don't meet more customer needs at less cost to ourselves, we'll soon be blown out of the water. I'll show them exactly what's going on in Asia and even with some of our domestic competitors, and then I'll challenge them to get together and bring me ideas for change—in two weeks max."

We asked him how he thought his listeners would react to his main message: *We need to meet more customer needs at less cost to ourselves, now*. Give us at least three thoughts that would probably run through their minds as he spoke, we said.

He answered, "Well, first they'd probably think: 'Uh-oh. There goes my travel allowance. There goes my vacation. There goes my job!' Then they'd think, 'That's impossible. I'm already working as hard as I can.' Finally, they might think, 'He's trying to influence us in the upcoming union vote.'"

So, would they be paying close attention and trying to do as he asked? His answer was a definite *no*.

### A Turnaround That Paid Off

The manager rewrote the presentation and gave it as follows.

After the main message, he immediately addressed his people's concerns. First, he said he could imagine that this news would frighten them about their jobs. Their heads came up, he told us, and he could see that he had hit on exactly what they were thinking. He told them there was little cause for worry if they did what another firm in a similar situation had done to improve, and he gave them that specific example.

Then he said they probably thought his demands were impossible; they were already working as hard as they could. Again, heads came up. No, he told them, it wasn't impossible, and he gave them an example of how one of them had shipped a product in less wrapping material than before, thereby saving both the mill and the customer wrapping and disposal charges.

He paused there to ask if anyone else had done or noticed similar creative solutions. People added some, and he put them on the flip chart.

Finally, he assured them that this talk had nothing to do with the upcoming negotia-

*(continued on page 11)*

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*To inspire people to give their best, focus on their needs, not yours.*

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ELIZABETH MOELLER

## ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

In the September/October *Newsletter* I covered the new section 508 legislation and the work of the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative Working Group. Legally, Web sites of federal and state governments and agencies working on government contracts must be accessible to the disabled. In this issue I cover some of the guidelines created by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Working Group, and explain their purpose. The complete set of guidelines can be found at <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/>. You can also download a checklist to determine whether your site meets those guidelines.

One clarification is very important: *Accessibility* and *usability* are not necessarily the same thing. A usable Web site may not be accessible if it does not follow the WAI guidelines. An accessible Web site, on the other hand, is almost always a usable Web site.

### The Guidelines

WAI presents 14 guidelines for Web designers to meet W3C priority level 1 accessibility, the level necessary to satisfy section 508 legislation. I have chosen to highlight some of them here. The remaining guidelines can be found at the *w3* URL.

*Provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.*

This is one of the core guidelines for an accessible Web site. Those who cannot see or hear need the information presented to them in a manner they can understand. And a person who does not speak the language used on the Web site also will benefit from visual clues. The equivalent information must serve the same purpose as the auditory or visual content.

To meet this guideline, you must use ALT tags on all images, provide printed scripts of all auditory and visual content (e.g., movies and audio-only material). In addition, the ALT tags need to be meaningful. Instead of saying "up arrow," for example, use the phrase "return to table of contents."

*Do not rely on color alone.*

This guideline is meant to assist color-deficient users and those who have monochrome monitors. If the colors are not significantly different, color-deficient users will not be able to distinguish among them. If the background and foreground colors are too similar, many people may not be able to read the text, and monochrome monitors may not be able to properly display the text.

*Use markup and style sheets and do so properly.*

Designers have a tendency, and I admit to this one, to use markup elements for design purposes instead of their intended purpose. For example, you often see tables used to help define a page layout, but screen readers and speech synthesizers may present such information incorrectly; reserve tables for tabular data. Cascading style sheets (CSS), not font tags, should be used to define the typeface, size, and color.

*Create tables that transform gracefully.*

Tables should be used only for tabular data, in which case column and row headers should be identified. Tables can be used for layout purposes only if they make sense when linearized; that is, if column 2 naturally follows column 1, then layout use can be justified.

*Ensure that pages featuring new technologies transform gracefully.*

While Web designers often like to use the latest and greatest technology, they must also present an alternative version to accommodate screen readers and other assistive devices. Web pages should be organized so that they can be read without the assistance of style sheets, scripts, Java applets, or any other new technology. Dynamic content (e.g., Flash animation) must have a text equivalent. Many Web sites offer a "text only" version. Although this is more cumbersome in terms of updating, it guarantees that all visitors will be able to see the content.

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*Grouping information helps users build the appropriate relationships.*

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*Design for device-independence.*

Just as with any other Web site, you must assume that people will use an older browser or just a keyboard or just a mouse or something else entirely. Add a text alternative to image maps, for example, which allows those who cannot use a pointing device to access the links.

*Provide context and orientation information.*

Grouping information helps users build the appropriate relationships. The use of frames is often discouraged for many reasons, but any that must be used need a title so that users can navigate from one frame to another easily.

*Provide clear navigation mechanisms.*

This guideline is common sense for any Web designer. Not only does it help users with cognitive disabilities, it also helps all users by preventing the “lost in space” feeling they often get when navigating through complex sites. All links should be clearly marked with meaningful labels.

Some Web designers think it is cute or part of the design to create thematic titles, but people with cognitive disabilities may not understand the relationship between the cute link name and the actual place they will go. In addition, site maps and bread-

crumb trails can help users better position themselves within a site so that they know where they are and how to get to the information they need.

*Ensure that documents are clear and simple.*

Finally, anyone who writes technical documents for a living understands the need for simplicity. The language used on a Web site should be the simplest possible with a minimum of jargon or other special terms. Making the text accessible to all readers will make the Web site more usable for everyone.

These guidelines and their related checkpoints are continually being reviewed and modified. The W3C/WAI Working Group maintains their Web site with regular updates. A visit there will not only help make your site more accessible, it may also help make your site more usable.

*Elizabeth Weise Moeller is vice president of PCS and chair of the meetings committee. She owns Interactive Media Consulting, LLC (+1 518 587 5107, 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.*

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*An accessible Web site  
is almost always a  
usable Web site.*

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## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

*(continued from page 9)*

tions. He just wanted them to succeed, he said, and he knew they could. Would they get together in focus groups to brainstorm solutions and bring him their ideas in a couple of weeks?

In less than a week, he had lists of ideas to meet more customer needs at lower costs to the mill. He also had the trust and goodwill of his workers. The presentation had achieved its goal because the manager had focused on his listeners’ needs.

This manager, indeed, became part of the solution, as his focus on others enabled

him to inspire them to think creatively and act willingly to solve the problem.

*Cheryl and Peter Reimold have been teaching communication skills to engineers, scientists, and businesspeople for 20 years. Their firm, PERC Communications (telephone +1 914 725 1024, e-mail perccom@aol.com), offers businesses consulting and writing services, as well as customized in-house courses on writing, presentation skills, and on-the-job communication skills. Visit their web site at <http://www.allaboutcommunication.com>.*



JEAN-LUC DOUMONT

## SITTING MAN

As I was strolling through the textile section of the lovely Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art in Santiago de Chile a few weeks ago, my attention was caught by a red and black woven artifact that looked like a cap with four points unexpectedly sticking out of it. Intrigued, I looked at the caption and read, “Bichromatic cap with four points.” Ah, but of course; says it all, doesn’t it?

While probably well meant, captions such as that one are utterly uninformative. By describing what any audience member can plainly see and immediately recognize, they are ineffectively redundant. Stating the *what* and not the *so what* of the display, they fail to convey a message, as defined in my last column (“Indeed!” in the September/October *Newsletter*). And yet the guides conducting tours of the museum have many interesting things to say about the bichromatic cap with four points. (Clearly, an explanatory caption sets other expectations than the mere title of a work of art. In Santiago’s National Museum of Fine Arts, I stopped to admire a painting by Chilean artist Sergio Montecino, representing some sort of dark landscape. The title, “Dark landscape,” did not add much either, but I did not expect more.)

The word “bichromatic” itself seems an unnecessarily complex way to say “of two colors,” with no real gain in conciseness as measured by the number of letters or syllables, at least in the English version. If fewer words is the goal at all cost, the caption might as well replace “with four points” by “tetrapointed.” Wouldn’t you agree that sounds a lot more scholarly?

The museum’s apparent but unexplained obsession with color multiplicity resulted in other surprising captions. I remember admiring a black vase that was labeled not “Black vase” but “Monochromatic vase.” Such a caption merely raises questions: Why does it focus on monochromaticity and not on any other, equally apparent, feature of the vase, such as shape or size? Unfortunately, it did not say.

Extreme as they may seem, the museum’s captions are not so different from most of the ones I encounter in scientific articles and technical documents. Unbelievably, a training participant even came across a block diagram labeled...“Block diagram.” Can you imagine including the photograph of a device in your document and simply adding as a caption, “Photograph”?

Titles of visual aids, such as slides, are often equally useless. A graph displaying the time on the horizontal scale and sales on the vertical one is typically titled “Evolution of sales as a function of time”—another case of ineffective redundancy. Since audience members presumably can read the axes of a graph, the caption could more usefully tell them what they might not readily recognize, that is, what the speaker is trying to convey by showing the graph. A better title might thus be “Sales doubled over the last two years.”

The *Chicago Manual of Style* actually makes a difference between a *caption* (the *what*, as a sentence fragment) and a *legend* (the *so what*, as one or more complete sentences), possibly chained. Descriptive captions, however, are redundant not only with well labeled technical illustrations, but also with well phrased, informative legends; they have little added value, if any.

The difference between *what* and *so what* captions was clearly illustrated by two of the museum’s figurines, similar at first sight, representing a sitting man. One was labeled “Sitting man,” when it was obvious he was sitting and (believe me) equally obvious he was a man. The other was labeled “Ball player”; while not an explicit message, this caption did tell me something I could not recognize by myself.

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

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*Captions such as “Sitting man” are utterly uninformative; it was obvious he was sitting and equally obvious he was a man.*

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## Reflections...

Think about it.

We work in a profession where there's much to reflect on. But reflection is more than looking inward, more than looking backward, more than staring glassy-eyed at a computer screen, pondering the wonders of the internet. Reflections are our experience, our knowledge, what we've learned, what we draw on—what we apply so that each effort is better.

We invite you to join us in Portland, Oregon, from 17 to 20 September to explore our theme: Reflections on Communication. We are looking for papers in the following categories, which represent the cyclical nature of reflections.



# Call for Papers

IPCC 2002  
17-20 September 2002

### Abstract Conceptualization

Ideas drive us to do what we do. They drive our research. They drive us to find new and better ways of reaching our users, of managing content, of pooling our knowledge. They drive us to improve our processes, reduce our costs; sometimes, they even drive us crazy.

*Possible topics include:*

- Technologies as solutions
- Knowledge management strategies
- Enterprise content management
- Adaptive information

### Concrete Experience

Concrete experience leads us to discover what works and what doesn't. We plan, we write, we structure, we deliver, we test.

We provide products and information to our users and then watch to see how and whether they use them the way we thought they would.

*Possible topics include:*

- Modeling information for reuse and adaptation
- Putting it all together
- Writing the pieces
- Testing for usability and human factors
- Applying research results

### Active Experimentation

Ideas drive us, but experimentation moves us from concept to reality. Experimentation helps us discover where and how to implement our ideas and where to apply our research.

*Possible topics include:*

- Identifying information needs
- Sharing and disseminating knowledge
- Prototyping a concept
- Structuring information to support different needs and uses
- Tracking information use

### Reflective Observation

What have we learned? Do we need new ideas? Which old ones work? What are the implications? Reflective observation is making sense of our active experimentation and concrete experiences. We ponder, explain our ideas and results, teach them to others. Reflective observation leads us back to abstract conceptualization—back to the start of the iterative reflective cycle.

*Possible topics include:*

- Addressing future education needs
- Reporting our findings
- Teaching our findings

## Share Your Reflections...

Come to IPCC 2002 and share your reflections. Write a 300-word description of your idea. Include:

- The session type: individual talk based on a paper, panel discussion of related ideas, or in-conference workshop (90-minute session)
- Your intended audience
- A brief description of your topic
- Your goals and how you plan to achieve them

### Tell Us About Yourself

Include a brief (150 words) bio of each author, plus contact information (your e-mail address, preferably). If there are multiple authors, at least one must show up to present the paper.

### Send Submissions To:

Pamela Kostur, program chair, at [pamela.kostur@sympatico.ca](mailto:pamela.kostur@sympatico.ca). We prefer electronic submissions. Phone +1 416 413 4892 if you need to send your proposal by postal mail.

### Proposals Are Due By:

8 March 2002. We'll send acceptance notifications and author instructions by 12 April. If your proposal is accepted, we expect you to write a paper about your idea and present it at the conference. Your paper will be due on 12 July 2002.

### Stay Tuned

For further updates visit our Web site (<http://www.ieee.pcs.org/2002/>) for the most current information on IPCC 2002.

## UKRAINE: A PERSPECTIVE FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS

BY KIRK ST.AMANT

The end of the Cold War created a new situation for professional and technical communicators. With the fall of Soviet Communism, new markets opened and participating in this international economy means understanding a new set of economic rules—capitalist ones. For one particular nation, Ukraine, attempts to compete in the international marketplace include attempts to develop professional and technical communication.

Once a part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has existed as an independent nation since 1991. Situated between Russia and Poland, Ukraine borders the Black sea on the south and Belarus (also once a part of the U.S.S.R.) on the north. While Ukraine's economy is struggling, its location between Poland (the West) and Russia (the East) and its relatively well educated technical workers (especially in the fields of science and engineering) could make it an important throughway in international trade. However, 75 years of Soviet rule created communication practices that affect international business success.

The command-based Soviet economy led to a command-based communication system. In general, a writer (usually a supervisor or an official) generated documents with little regard for how well readers (namely subordinates) understood those documents. Rather, the reader/subordinate had to determine what the writer/superior wanted, and then respond accordingly or face some form of chastisement or punishment. This command-style communication structure often meant that concepts such as audience analysis and usability testing remained relatively undeveloped. (One remnant of this style is the use of paragraphs that include several topics with no attempt to explain how those topics are interrelated.)

Also, the Soviet focus on status and rank sometimes resulted in a highly formal style of long, complex sentences (designed to acknowledge the reader's status). These

cultural communication differences can, in turn, greatly affect Ukraine's ability to succeed in the global marketplace. One organization, the Consortium for the Enhancement of Ukrainian Management Education (CEUME) recognized this link between communication and economic development in Ukraine and is using training in professional communication to improve Ukrainian business practices.

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development, CEUME focuses on economic change through education. The idea is to train the faculty from various Ukrainian business and management institutions in both international business practices and how to teach those practices to Ukrainian business and management students and to Ukrainian business owners and managers. To achieve this goal, CEUME conducts training workshops, including two week-long summer institutes dedicated to Ukrainian educators. These workshops are held in Ukraine and each consists of five instructional areas (e.g., marketing, finance, communication, ethics, etc.) led by a team of teachers from the United States, Poland, and Ukraine. These teaching teams provide participants with an overview of key concepts, ideas, and practices relating to business topics as well as train them in how to teach these topics to their own students.

For the 2001 CEUME summer institutes, professional communication was selected as one of the areas of instruction, the idea being that effective communication is essential to business success. As much of today's business communication relates to technology, the instructors selected technical communication as the foundation for teaching professional communication techniques. They chose Kristin R. Woolever's *Writing for the Technical Professions* (1999) as the textbook, and each of the class lectures had students examine different aspects (e.g., audience analysis, formatting, etc.) and genres (e.g., oral presentations, memos, faxes, etc.) related to conveying

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*The instructors quickly learned how aspects of Ukrainian culture affect the overall communication process.*

---

technical information to various audiences (e.g., managers, technicians, lay persons, etc.). Similarly, in-class exercises and assignments required participants to practice their ability to format and present different kinds of technical information in different ways to different readers.

While participants were generally receptive to these ideas and teaching methods, the instructors quickly learned how aspects of Ukrainian culture affect the overall communication process. Few participants, for example, seemed familiar with the concept of audience or the idea that the reader's background might affect how he or she uses a given document. Over time, and through lectures and exercises, participants began to understand the concept of audience, and the class worked together to develop a checklist for how to best present information to certain readers (e.g., managers, technicians, investors, etc.).

Similarly, the concept of face, or external public appearance, created interesting teaching situations. In Ukraine, face is related to the idea that individuals do not wish to make themselves look bad in public, nor do they wish to make others feel awkward or uncomfortable. As a result, Ukrainian participants often avoided asking questions in order to not:

- Make themselves look bad publicly by admitting they did not know or understand something.
- Make presenters look bad publicly by confronting that presenter on something he or she did poorly.

As a result, it was often difficult for non-Ukrainian instructors (particularly the American ones) to determine whether participants understood the information presented during a lecture. (Requests of "Does anyone have any questions?" were often met with either silence or a "No" response.) Conversely, many Ukrainian participants later admitted some discomfort with the instructor's desire to ask questions; for example, "Is the instructor trying to draw me into a trap to make me look bad?"—a common ploy used to reaffirm an individual's status under the old Soviet system.

Perhaps the most interesting cultural issue, however, involved selecting the language for classroom interaction. During the 75 years of Soviet rule, Russian was the official language of education, business, and politics in the U.S.S.R., and the Ukrainian language was not taught in schools nor used in most public forums. When Ukraine became an independent nation, Ukrainian became the official language of education and public interaction. As a result, most Ukrainians speak Russian fluently, but many older individuals have problems speaking and understanding Ukrainian.

In Ukraine, however, the use of the Russian language can be wrought with political and emotional sensitivities. For example, to some individuals, the use of Russian can imply that Ukraine is still a part of "greater Russia" and not its own independent state. As a result, selecting the language of presentation in Ukraine could place communicators in a complex situation where the language that would reach the greatest reading/listening audience could carry with it the most volatile results.

In the case of the CEUME professional communication class, Ukrainian was used as the primary language of presentation and translation when non-Ukrainian instructors presented information. Presenters, however, agreed to explain concepts in Russian if questions or confusion arose. (For individuals interested in doing business in Ukraine, perhaps the best solution would be to have documents translated into both Ukrainian and Russian.)

The result of these two week-long training sessions was a two-way education process that benefitted all involved. Ukrainian participants learned about Western concepts of technical and professional communication, and American participants learned how Eastern European history and culture affect communication practices in Ukraine. Instructors of the professional communication course are drafting a communication textbook for Ukrainian audiences, and they are maintaining contact via e-mail with many summer institute participants to create online resources and online discussion groups for those participants.

*(continued on page 27)*

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*The concept of face, or external public appearance, created interesting teaching situations.*

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SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

SUZDAL AND MOSCOW

A return trip for some, a first visit for others, the people and sites in this remarkable area made this a location that will long be remembered.

Special thanks to K. Baranich, R. Blicq, R. Giliarevskii, L. Moretto, and G. Palmer for their photographic contributions on these pages.



Eduardo Clark,  
Henrich Lantsberg

Henrich Lantsberg,  
Ludmila Sushkova,  
Yuri Gulyaev



Ruggero Giliarevskii,  
Mark Kolchinsky,  
Irina Shaikevich



Henrich Lantsberg,  
Gail Palmer



Scott DeLoach toasting  
with Nicolai Kalenov



Karen Baranich,  
Oleg Zaikin,  
Jean-luc Doumont



Luybov Alekseeva,  
Ludmila Bukanova,  
Alexandra Elfimova,  
Ruggero Giliarevskii,  
Gail Palmer, Eduardo  
Clark, Jean-luc Doumont

Lisa Moretto, with Elizabeth Pierce  
and Ludmila Bukanova, toasts  
Henrich Lantsberg (*back to camera*)



Walking to St. Euthymus  
Monastery of the Saviour,  
Suzdal



Jean-luc Doumont  
at the whiteboard



Eduardo Clark, Henrich Lantsberg





SUZDAL REFLECTIONS



Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, rebuilt 1994



Henrich Lantsberg, Mark Kolchinsky, Tatyana Kolchinsky



Karen Baranich raises a toast to Nicolai Kalenov and Oleg Zaikin; Ruggero Giliarevskii watches from her right



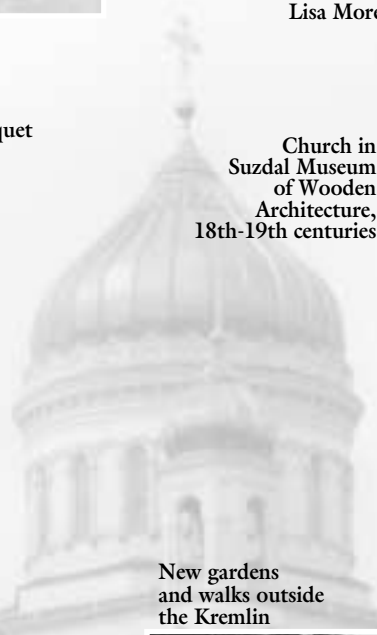
Luybov Alekseeva, Irina Shaikovich, Yuri Gulyaev



Irina Shaikovich, Patrick Hofmann, Lisa Moretto



Banquet time



Church in Suzdal Museum of Wooden Architecture, 18th-19th centuries



Elizabeth Pierce, Oleg Zaikin, Lisa Moretto, Ron Blicq

New gardens and walks outside the Kremlin

Back row: Gail Palmer, not identified, Eduardo Clark, Tatyana Kolchinsky, Jean-luc Doumont (*in back*), Elizabeth Pierce, Oleg Zaikin, Lisa Moretto, Everett Zimmerman, Scott DeLoach, Patrick Hofmann, Irina Shaikovich, Ron Blicq.  
Front row: Ludmila Bukanova, Valentina Lantsberg, Gennady Vorobiev, Muriel Zimmerman, Karen Baranich, Alexandra Elfimova



## SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

## SUZDAL INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

*(continued from page 1)*

and fascinatingly, with a reasonable estimation of a learning efficiency).

Many reports and speeches made a good impression on me. I would like to note some of them. *Patrick Hofmann*, a young designer from Canada, showed how it is possible to get rid of words and replace them by ideographs in instructions for use by an industrial organization. He personally used a minimum of words both spoken and written on slides. *Karen Baranich*, an employee of Scana Services, U.S., convincingly showed the necessity and methods of an estimation of efficiency of her own communication activity. *Eduardo Clark*, an employee of Nortel Networks, U.S., spoke interestingly about the role of now trendy documentation management systems for professional services organizations. *Jean-luc Doumont*, a Belgian consultant, had well deserved success recounting his experience with traditional methods used in creating Web sites.

The session on technical communication education was very successful, in my opinion. It was moderated from the American side by *Lisa Moretto*. An interesting joint report was presented by *Julie Fisher* from Victoria University, Australia, and *Ron Blicq*, senior consultant from RGI International, Canada. In its first part the future

of the profession was described, and in the second part the history of its origin and development was discussed. A list of manuals on technical writing in Great Britain, Russia, and the U.S. (1908–1999) was added to the second part of the report (28 titles, among them 19 in Russian). *Elizabeth Pierce*, an independent consultant from Rochester, New York, told about her experience training children in technical communications skills. At last, the emotional and well documented report of *Gail Palmer*, lecturer from the Georgia Institute of Technology, made a big impression. She spoke on the integration of professional communication knowledge and methods in engineering education.

I write nothing on the Russian scientists' reports, not because I think them less successful, but simply because I am familiar with the activity of my domestic colleagues for a long time, and the contents of their reports were already known to me. I note, to my regret, that we (with rare exception) have not enough experience of participation in international scientific meetings. It was reflected in the quality of our report presentations (e.g., absence or poor quality of slides and colloquial English).

As a whole, we got a great benefit from the colloquium. Participants are right in having agreed that it is necessary to arrange such meetings more frequently (it is desirable each two years). Themes of colloquiums should be better determined and more concrete. Reports may be fewer, but it is necessary to discuss them. Russian colleagues may recommend inviting more experts from business concerns, banks, manufacturers, journal editors, and libraries who are active in international projects. In a word, professional communication needs to be actively advanced in the business life of Russia.

*Dr. Giliarevskii is a professor and head of the department of journalism at Moscow State University and head of the information theory department at the All-Russian Institute for Scientific Information.*

*Many experts in different areas of the national economy are engaged in this activity [professional communication].*

*Lisa Moretto,  
Eduardo Clark,  
Henrich Lantsberg,  
Ludmila Sushkova,  
Yuri Gulyaev*



*R. Blicq*

## SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

## SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EASTERN PRESENTATIONS

**Electronic Books and Libraries**

Ruggero Giliarevskii  
Moscow State University

In his presentation on Thursday morning, Ruggero Giliarevskii addressed the what, the how, and the why of electronic books. After defining electronic books in contrast to traditional printed ones, in terms of structure and entry points among other properties, he tackled the difficult issue of the electronic edition, emphasizing the need for traceability of the information published online. Discussing the various roles involved in publishing, he made a plea for having authors, publishers, and users of scholarly information work together more closely. Wishing for timely publication, authors may indeed be tempted to bypass such traditional publishing steps as peer review and editing, to the detriment of the reliability and traceability of the information thus published.

In answer to a question, Prof. Giliarevskii acknowledged a current lack of respect for copyright laws in Russia. In his delightful, genuine style, he explained with some infectious amusement how one can “officially” buy pirated software (such as illegal copies of Microsoft Office), that is, receive a legal invoice for the illegal copy and thus be entitled to refunds, exchanges, and technical support from the store. Quite a paradox, indeed.

You can reach Ruggero at [giliarevski@viniti.msk.su](mailto:giliarevski@viniti.msk.su).

—Jean-luc Doumont

**Automatic Information—Library Service for Scientists**

Nicolai Kalenov  
Library for Natural Sciences, Russian Academy of Sciences

As deputy director of the Library for Natural Sciences (LNS) of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, Nicolai Kalenov gave us a tour of the library’s electronic resources, made available through the Internet (<http://ben.irex.ru/>). Resources available to all include electronic catalogs, links to tables of contents for journals,

weekly lists of new acquisitions, and information about the library systems, about science in Russia, and about natural sciences on the Internet. Resources limited to LNS readers include the full text of journal articles (with access paid by the LNS) and various additional facilities, such as for ordering items. The Web site comes in both Russian and English versions, though the English version may not be as extensive as the Russian one.

Unsurprisingly, Prof. Kalenov was most interested in subsequent presentations on Web-site design by some of the Western delegates. At his request, one of us had already provided him with comments about the look and feel of the LNS Web site, with a view to possible improvements. This feedback is a small action, of course, but a sign that the collaboration agreement signed at the end of the colloquium between the PCS and the Russian Popov Society is more than just words on paper.

You can reach Nicolai at [nek@ben.irex.ru](mailto:nek@ben.irex.ru).

—Jean-luc Doumont

**Increasing the Effectiveness of Scientific Communication**

Mark Kolchinsky  
Institute for Industrial Development  
Informelektro

In the Professional Communication Society, we all understand that the quality of our documents directly influences how effective the information is and how the user will retain and use it. The problem has always been “how do we explain our value?”

Mark Kolchinsky, a principle researcher from the institute, presented a fascinating algorithm for measuring a document’s effectiveness. In his research he was able to quantify the benefits of professional communication and the impact they have on scientific information.

Rather than looking solely at information design characteristics and usability issues, Mark has spent decades researching the time scientists spend on processing information. His formula calculates how much

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*Struggling to understand the breadth and depth of professional communication*

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SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

time is spent searching, comprehending, preparing, and transmitting information. Mark's results show information developers can decrease the time scientists spend processing information, rather than using it, by considering several factors: version control, document quality (simple and consistent language), and navigation (only a few of the factors).

This information is extremely valuable to organizations and managers who are faced with the question of how a professional communicator influences the final product or process. Mark Kolchinsky has developed a way to quantify and measure a difficult concept and with that he has empowered professional communicators.

You can reach Mark at [lvovich@cityline.ru](mailto:lvovich@cityline.ru).

—Lisa Moretto

based on bibliometric indicators such as number of papers, number of citations, and percentage of the country's papers in the world's total for a given field. Her methodology provides an important way to assess contributions to the advance of science from the point of view of country where the research took place.

You can reach Irina at [ishaikev@mail.ru](mailto:ishaikev@mail.ru).

—Muriel Zimmerman

**Resource Assignment and Performance Optimization**

Oleg Zaiken

Technical University of Szczecin, Poland

In a somewhat off-topic presentation, Oleg Zaiken tackled the optimization of resources in what he called "open multi-server queuing networks," a model that applies well to corporate computer and telecommunication networks. Combining an analytical approach (which readily gives the exact solution, but in simplified cases only) with a stochastic simulation (which may be less accurate, but suffers no restrictions), he designed an optimization algorithm based on a recursive exploration of the network that retains the "best option so far" at every step (an approach known as "branch and bound"). While presenting his research, he did his best not to lose too many of us in what was clearly a very technical presentation.

As he himself pointed out, Prof. Zaiken's choice of topic illustrates the ambiguity of the phrase "professional communication" in Russia and possibly other countries (he now teaches at a Polish university). Until he took part in the colloquium, he was convinced that the phrase could only cover communication tools and other technical concepts. A similar confusion arose during the colloquium from the use by Russian speakers of the word informatics, with two possible meanings: For some, it meant computer science, as it does in many languages, such as French (informatique) and Dutch (informatica); for others, it meant the science of information and, maybe more specifically, the flow and management of information within an organization.

You can reach Oleg at [ozaikine@wi.ps.pl](mailto:ozaikine@wi.ps.pl).

—Jean-luc Doumont



R. Blizg

Back row:  
*Peter Zoudkov,*  
*Tatyana Kolchinsky,*  
*Irina Shaikovich,*  
*Gennady Vorobiev,*  
*Ruggero Giliarevskii,*  
*Nicolai Kalenov,*  
*Luybov Alekseeva,*  
*Oleg Zaikin.*

Front row:  
*Mark Kolchinsky,*  
*Henrich Lantsberg*

**Bibliometric Assessment**

Irina Marshakova-Shaikovich  
 KW University, Bydgoszcz, Poland

Professor Marshakova-Shaikovich reported on a research project aimed at specifying the contribution of Russia and other newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, as well as other individual countries, to the literature of science. The period of her study was 1993-1997, and her material was drawn from the databases of the Institute for Scientific Information, the Science Citation Index, the Social Sciences Citation Index, and data published by the Moscow Centre of Researches and Statistics of Science. She evaluated a country's contribution to scientific literature

SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION IN RUSSIA:  
IT'S WHERE YOU LEAST EXPECT IT

BY ELIZABETH PIERCE

I remember, as a little schoolgirl growing up in a little town in Northern Indiana in the 1960s, we'd have periodic drills in case the Communists bombed our little school. The school siren would alarm, we'd rush down to the basement and we'd tuck our heads between our knees and keep very, very still until the siren stopped. I was scared, as was most of America at that time.

As time passed, our media showed us large, stoic-faced women with scarves around their heads who looked very imposing. We saw empty shelves and long lines of people waiting for food. We saw Yeltsin standing on top of a tank as the Russian White House burned in the background.

The state of Russia now is exactly what I didn't expect it to be. Our English-speaking tour guide in Moscow (who, by the way, was lovely, lithe, and blond) had those same bomb drills in her elementary school, only they were afraid the Americans were coming. The shelves were filled with products, and people (Russian and non-Russian) were buying! As a delegate for PCS, I stayed in a hotel near the Moscow River with a breathtaking view of the White House—no visual damage, no tanks, and no Yeltsin. Just a beautiful sunny day halfway across the world from home and, now, a lifetime of fears ago.

At the risk of sounding like an over-enthusused vacationer who claims, "That was the best vacation place I ever went to!" —*I loved everything about Russia and its people.* Let me tell you three reasons why.

Three of us tried to manage the Metro (no easy trick when nobody reads the Cyrillic alphabet!) looking obviously lost, when an English-speaking Russian approached. He politely asked if he could help us. We explained which stop we wanted and that we didn't know how to reach its connection. He turned around from the direction he was originally heading and said, "Follow me." We followed him as he led us to the next connection and told us how many stops the Metro would make before we would reach our final destination. He then politely said goodbye and hurried on his way.

We stared at each other in disbelief. He had seen our dismay and took time to help us. And that help did not come in the form of pointing in the air and explaining, or jabbing at our map in an "I'm so frustrated with these tourists!" manner. The help came in a way that as Americans we often fail to provide. He took us physically to the place we needed to be and then explained how to make the next step.

Then, there was the shopping excursion to Izmaylsky Park. On one side of the park, Russians were buying shoes, clothes, leather coats, school supplies, and cosmetic toiletries from vendor stalls. As we walked along, one stall of shoes looked like another stall of shoes, but Russians were buying.

We found the section of the park that sold the more traditional souvenirs that we were looking for: blue and white ceramic ware, linens, lacquered boxes, and, of course, the nested wooden dolls (matryoshka). There were many variations of the traditional doll, the babushka, but right next to them were Disney characters, and next to those were football players and the political leaders of the U.S. and Russia.

...a lifetime of fears ago.

Ron Blicq getting just the right view of Elizabeth Pierce and Lisa Moretto in Moscow's Red Square



K. Barentsch

SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

At first I was stunned and in disbelief. My God, I thought. What next? A Russian Disney World? After I calmed down a bit and gave it some thought, I nodded and began to smile at the Russians' new ability to sell to a certain market. We were witnessing capitalism at its best.

In all my years of conferences, I never had an experience where the delegates congregated just to swap stories and become friends.

Oh yes, I almost forgot, I was there for a conference on technical communication. Where was all the technical communication in this conference I attended? Besides the brilliant Russian delegates' contributions at the conference, technical communication was in a polite Russian man's step-by-step directions that kept our heads from spinning because of our inability to understand the Metro signs. It was in seeing that the Russians are performing audience analysis to market their products successfully to foreign markets. And it was in an evening of swapping stories with people whose language I can't speak. I "listened" to their body language and their voice inflections, I watched their eyes, and I occasionally asked Tatyana (a delegate's teacher-wife) to translate the parts of the message I didn't understand. We listened, we laughed, we shared, and we became colleagues and friends.

Not bad for a little schoolgirl who kept her head between her knees.

*Elizabeth Pierce received a B.S. degree in secondary English education from Ohio State University. She worked in business and industry until she became mind-numbed and returned to school (Bowling Green State University, Ohio) to receive an M.A. degree in technical communication with a cognate area of training in business and industry. Back into business and industry she became a national award-winning writer in the field of technical communication. In her spare time she is an editor and associate consultant with RGI International, a firm specializing in technical oral and written communication skills. Earlier this year she began a new career with Monroe Community College (Rochester, New York) as an adjunct; epiercel@rochester.rr.com.*



L. Moretto

*Matryoshka  
(nested wooden dolls)  
in a Moscow market*

Two of my new Russian friends asked some of us to join them after the second night of the conference for drinks in their hotel room and to swap stories. We were first to arrive and found that Oleg and Nicolai had made up a table of crackers and vodka. Minutes later, a few more Western and Russian delegates knocked on the door with oranges, cucumbers, and more vodka. Within a half-hour the hotel room that could fit four people comfortably was hosting a party of 14 with more to wander in and out as the evening progressed!

Despite the Western delegates' inability to speak Russian, and the Russian delegates' struggling with their English, we managed to spend the evening swapping stories about our wives and husbands, dogs and cats, and presidents and past presidents. We talked about our societies' likenesses and differences and mostly just became friends rather than conference attendees.

*...swapping stories...*

**I**f you want to succeed, double your failure rate."

— Thomas J. Watson

SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

# I WANT TO GO BACK!

BY RON BLICQ

**A**s a repeat visitor (I was on a small team representing PCS previously, for conferences and courses in 1990, 1991, and 1992), I am writing about what has remained the same and some of the significant changes I noticed.

**First, what has remained the same:**

- Undoubtedly, the friendliness of the Russian people comes right to the fore, regardless of whether they were hosts I had met before, new hosts, or others we encountered in hotels, restaurants, shops, in the Metro, on buses, and even in taxis.
- So, too, do the smiling, welcoming faces of Henrich and Valentina Lantsberg, and of Henrich’s daughter Svetlana and her friend Boris Smolyakov. Henrich and Valentina are not only hosts who take every imaginable step to ensure your needs are looked after, they also are great fun to be with.
- Every time I have been to Moscow, Svetlana and Boris have taken me on unique visits: to museums, art galleries, and churches—often places most visitors never see. This time they entertained several of us on a four-hour boat ride on the river that winds through Moscow; they described what we were seeing, and

its history, which made it so much more meaningful than “just a boat ride.” We write to each other every year-end, and throughout the 11 years I have known Henrich, Valentina, Svetlana, and Boris, their friendship has never wavered.

- But changing travelers checks is still not a friendly process. Ten years ago there were enormous problems because travelers checks could not be accepted. This time they could be, but only at a bank and even then there was great hesitation and we needed someone to translate. But this time there also was a savior right in our hotel: an ATM.

“Do you wish to converse in Russian or English?” the screen announced (in Russian and English). And then: “Do you want Rubles or Dollars?”

- The Russians love to party! Our hosts set up a banquet Russian-style, with an exceptional menu that reached us course after course as the evening progressed. And of course the vodka and the champagne flowed, and the toasts became jollier and more frequent. Another evening, after a day of conferencing, some of our Russian friends organized a get-together in one of the hotel bedrooms (18 of us in a small room, until a party pooper in the neighboring room pounded on the wall). They explained that this kind of after-conference partying is traditional and a great way to cement new friendships in an informal way.
- The speed and efficiency of Moscow’s underground Metro trains are unparalleled. If you stand at a particular platform, at peak hours trains still stop there every 52 seconds. Passengers disembark and embark more quickly than in any other city I know.
- The slowness of passing through Immigration and Passport Control may be unparalleled also: 1.5 hours, both arriving and leaving. The increased number of visitors has exacerbated this problem.

*Svetlana Lantsberg and Boris Smolyakov host a boat tour on the Moscow River.*

Third row: *Elizabeth Pierce and Lisa Moretto.*  
Second row: *Svetlana and Karen Baranich.*  
Front row: *Boris.*



R. Blicq

SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

Now for the changes I noticed:

- Moscow seemed so much more a relaxed city, with bright lights (rare ten years ago), sidewalk cafes and beer gardens, revitalized shops, and increased traffic. Significant were the lawns, flower gardens, walks, and fountains immediately below the Kremlin walls, with people sitting in the sun on the grass and gathering around the bars beside the asphalt walk. That added so much to a warm summer's afternoon.
- The hotel rooms are greatly improved, at much lower prices than we had expected. In the Ukraina Hotel in Moscow, where I had stayed once before, the rooms now were more spacious and better equipped, and with a bathroom that would match any American hotel (there was even a stool to help me step over the high bathtub edge!).
- The restaurants, which now offer a wide range of inviting meals from a broad menu (ten years ago, eating out was very basic), and the cafes are very cheerfully decorated. Our hotel breakfasts, which ten years ago offered a very limited selection, this time provided for every taste.
- Shopping is much easier. Ten years ago I had to go to a shop in an Intourist hotel—and pay extraordinarily high prices—if I wanted to buy food or personal items. Then, residents could be seen lining up to buy just basic products, if they were available. (From 1990 I remember seeing a long line of women patiently waiting to buy socks that had just arrived.) Now, the shops are well stocked and the small supermarket beside our hotel had regular and frozen foods and drinks equal to those I see in Winnipeg, and at much lower prices (although I realized

that for many Moscow residents the prices would likely be out of reach).

- I particularly loved the atmosphere in the little shops in the town center of Suzdal (which is just a little town). The shops offered a more limited range of meats, cheeses, fruits, ice cream, canned goods, wines and liquors, with the meats and cheeses displayed the old-fashioned way in a glass-fronted cooler, reminding me of a typical village shop in a remote part of Great Britain.
- The traffic on the roads, with rush-hour line-ups and many expensive new vehicles among the older ones, now reminds me of home. Ten years ago, drivers would remove their windshield wipers whenever they parked because if they didn't, the wipers would be stolen (they were virtually unobtainable then); today, drivers leave their windshield wipers *in situ*.
- E-mail is how Lisa Moretto, the PCS coordinator for the Suzdal colloquium, sent our papers to Henrich, for inclusion in the proceedings. Ten years ago, I collected hard copy originals of each person's paper, flew with them to London, and placed them as captain-accompanied documents on a British Airways flight to Moscow, to ensure that they reached Henrich. This year, we sent our papers to Lisa by e-mail, who in turn assembled them into a set and e-mailed them to Henrich.

Technology has created immense change, and the country we have just visited has felt enormous change, in just a short time. Yet the genuine warmth and friendliness of the Russian people remain unchanged.

Is it any wonder that I want to go back?

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*1991 to 2001: what has changed and what has remained the same*

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*(continued from page 4)*

- Terry Malkinson edited the proceedings of IPCC/SIGDOC 2000 and IPCC 01.
- Last, but most important of all, Beth Moeller served ably as PCS vice president for the past two years. She has been

an esteemed and helpful sounding board to me, as well as an able chair of the PCS meetings committee. I look forward to the next two years when she will lead us as PCS president. Good luck, Beth!



SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

# DREAMS OF THE HEART

BY GAIL PALMER

Sometimes dreams really do come true. I know because mine came true: To visit Russia has always been my dream.

Moscow—magical, marvelous Moscow is a city of timeless beauty and breathtaking treasures—the third Rome. My undergraduate degree is in history but I was unprepared for Moscow. On the drive from Sheremetyevo airport to the Gostinitsa (Hotel) Ukraina, the car sped past the place where the German army was stopped at the outskirts of Moscow in 1941—that was just the beginning. Along every boulevard, around every corner, and tucked into every side street, history exists in Moscow.

What a mind-blurring dichotomy: A 21st century haute couture boutique and a 16th century cathedral are just across Krasnaya Ploschad (Red Square) from each other. Being a child of the cold-war era, I assumed that the name referred to the red associated with the U.S.S.R. government. Not so; in Old Slavonic, *krasny* means both red and beautiful. Both meanings are apropos; the bricks surrounding Red Square are red, and the ploschad is beautiful.

The Moscow Kremlin (until a week ago, I thought there was only one Kremlin) with its jaunty yellow and white buildings is a sight to behold. I expected the buildings

to be drab and gloomy—I was mistaken. Those cheery facades were a delightful surprise. If the pastel palate adds a note of cheer, the seven sisters (those Stalinistic, wedding-cake-like structures scattered throughout the city) add a whimsical note to Moscow’s skyline. Of course, the Hotel Ukraina is one of those structures.

Thirteen and a half hours of touring with the amazingly knowledgeable tour guide provided for the IEEE PCS members by the Popov Society just scratched the surface. The city tour was a marvelous way to get oriented and see not only major landmarks such as the Novodevichy (New Maiden) Convent, but also lesser known points of interest such as Isadora Duncan’s home and dance studio and the unbelievable Metro system.

Cathedral Square with its unrivaled beauty and the State Armoury with its unsurpassed collections—it would take a lifetime to absorb all those treasures. The nearby Alexander Garden with its whimsical statutes representing the most beloved of Russian fairy tales is delightful.

Encompassing all of this history—even 20th century history—is a thriving, bustling, sprawling metropolis with a culturally diverse citizenry. Moscow is self-assured, certain of who she is and where she has been, aware of her past and justifiably hopeful of her future.

The leisurely bus ride to Suzdal served as a transition from the sophistication of Moscow to the idyllic setting of Suzdal. However, nothing could have prepared me for the exquisite experiences that awaited me in that tiny Russian village whose written history began in 1024.

The Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady, the oldest cathedral in the village, dates from 1222. Of the original 15 monasteries and convents in Suzdal, five of those treasures remain today. In addition, windmills, a church, several houses, barns, and other structures have been brought to Suzdal

*Moscow: breathtaking, bustling, dichotomous, diverse, sophisticated, whimsical*

*At the Cathedral of St. Basil, in Moscow: Elizabeth Pierce, Karen Baranich, tour guide Elena, Gail Palmer, Patrick Hofmann, Lisa Moretto, Scott DeLoach*

R. Blinn



SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

from other villages in the Vladimir region, and they make up the Museum of Wooden Architecture and Peasant Life.

Suzdal flourished in the 12th and early 13th centuries. Yuri Dolgoruki (George Long Arm), the Prince of Suzdal, was the first prince to base his power in the North.

The tomb of another prince, Dmitry Pozharsky, a 17th century hero, is located in Suzdal. With citizen Minin, Prince Pozharsky led the Russian liberation movement against Poland.

Dinner at the conference center the first night in Suzdal was my first real opportunity to talk with any of the Russians. My new friends startled me with

the breadth of their knowledge. They are very familiar with the works of American writers and, as for Russian literature, their interest in the subject is equally as impressive as is their knowledge. Likewise for their knowledge of history and the fine arts; these are multi-talented, versatile people.

Russians are also realists. My new friends have known life under the yoke of Communism. They are patient, tolerant, and accepting of inconveniences or disruptions in their daily lives. They are self-reliant, but they are extremely generous in offering their time and effort to help others. At the same time they are looking life squarely in the eye and dealing with it as it is, Russians are also optimistic. I sensed an underlying current of optimism about their future.

My Russian friends have dignity; they possess an awareness of what is appropriate, and they act accordingly. Their manners

are not merely perfunctorily polite—they are genuinely gracious. There is gentleness and genteelness in their actions. They extend this graciousness to each other as well as to their guests; their manners are natural, not learned or contrived. Our hosts exercised the utmost concern for our comfort and pleasure. The conference ran smoothly, and our hosts paid attention to every possible detail that they thought would enhance our visit to their country.

My experiences in Russia seem like a kaleidoscope—sights, sounds, and feelings all merging together into an exquisite whole. Certainly, for me, one of the most moving experiences came in Suzdal when I entered the Cathedral of the Transfiguration in the St. Euthymus Monastery of the Saviour, which was founded in 1352. A sense of utter reverence instantly enveloped me. Then our guide told us that we were in for a surprise, and what a surprise it was!

I was completely unprepared for the sensory overload I experienced when The Blagovest (Male Vocal Company) of the John of Damascus Church Chorister Fraternity began singing. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with my new Belgium, Canadian, Russian, and American friends, I wept. The sheer beauty of the moment overwhelmed me.

It is difficult for me to separate the professional part of the international colloquium from the personal part. The exchange of ideas was most interesting and highly informative. This exchange was an ongoing one. It was not limited to the presentations alone; it continued whenever several of us gathered.

I was most struck by the fact that all of the participants share many of the same goals. Although we seek to accomplish those goals by different approaches, we seem to be striving toward similar results. Despite our cultural differences, a realization of the commonality of our professional purposes and the universal nature of our professional aspirations fosters mutual respect.

One big lesson I take with me from my Russian excursion (I will love that word until I die—it is what our trip into the



G. Zahner

Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady, in Suzdal

*Russians:  
dignified, discerning,  
gracious, optimistic,  
patient, realistic,  
self-reliant, versatile*

## SUZDAL REFLECTIONS

village of Suzdal was called) is that communication is so much more than words. Communication is sharing—it is a freely given, open exchange. It is facial expressions; it is hand and body gestures; it is that indescribable rapport—that spark that ignites between people. Communication knows no boundaries; it has no language barriers.

Tonight, as I listen to the chants of The Blagovest and savor my Russian candy in the familiarity of my home in Atlanta, my mind and heart drift to another time, to another place. My mind wonders, “Was

it really real, or was it all a dream?” My heart smiles it knows the answer.

*Gail Oliver Palmer is a native Virginian who earned a B.A. degree from Mary Baldwin College in 1967 and an M.Ed. degree from the University of South Carolina in 1989. She is a lecturer in professional communication skills in the school of electrical and computer engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Previously, she taught in secondary schools, wrote for three metropolitan newspapers, and was a college textbook production editor; gpalmer@ece.gatech.edu.*

## UKRAINE: A PERSPECTIVE

*(continued from page 15)*

The CEUME communication instructors are also interested in working with the IEEE PCS to provide information and support for Ukrainian communicators. Individuals interested in learning more about CEUME, Ukraine, or the development of support systems for Ukrainian professional communicators are encouraged to contact me via e-mail at [stam0032@tc.umn.edu](mailto:stam0032@tc.umn.edu).

*Kirk St. Amant was an instructor at the 2000 and 2001 CEUME summer institutes where he taught business communication, organizational communication, online communication, and corporate leadership. He is a graduate student at the University of Minnesota where his research interests include intercultural and international communication and online communication.*

## IEEE PRESIDENTS' SCHOLAR RECOGNIZED

**M**ariangela Lisanti is a first-semester freshman at Harvard, majoring in physics. But before she settled in, she was honored in two additional ways for her remarkable performance at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, at which she won the IEEE Foundation-funded IEEE Presidents' Scholarship. “I predict that she will be heard from in the future,” said past president Bruce Eisenstein, who presented the award.

Ms. Lisanti was invited to give a talk at the October IEEE Nanotech Conference in Hawaii, where she spoke about her scholarship winning project: Conductance Quantization in Au Nanocontacts. Also in October, Ms. Lisanti was honored with the National Italian-American Foundation Youth Achievement Award, which is presented each year to a young Italian-American who has excelled in his or her chosen field.

“Who knows most speaks quietly.”

— *Herbert V. Prochnow*

## TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS ARE WHERE YOU FIND THEM

BY LISA MORETTO

Nicolai Kalenov, deputy director of the Library for Natural Sciences, Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, presented an extensive tour of the library Web site and the electronic resources it provides over the Internet. Although I was impressed with the volume of information and the structure of the site, my most interesting observation was that Nicolai does not consider himself a technical communicator.

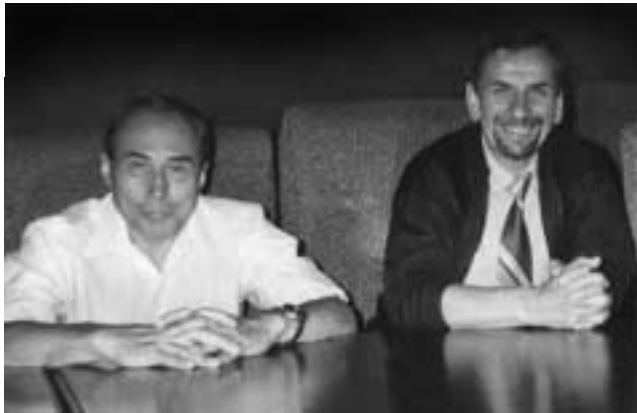
I shared with him a recent article featured in the May 2001 STC newsletter *Intercom*:

“Technical Writers in Russia.” The article basically said that the profession did not exist in Russia. As I watched Nicolai describe his work and provide examples of his search tools, I couldn’t help but recognize him as a valuable colleague and most professional technical communicator.

I made a point of seeking his company during several of our social occasions and did my best to convince him that he was “one of us.” I explained the struggle technical writers in the U.S. have had to bring the profession to the point where our contributions are recognized for the value we add to products and services. He understood, and even related to many of the stories. He said he had come as a library scientist and expected to meet others in the same field. Yet when we said our good-byes, I felt confident that I had persuaded him to look at himself as a technical communicator and to approach his role not only as someone who distributes information but as one who makes the information more accessible and usable. Isn’t that what technical communicators do?

The library Web site is <http://ben.irex.ru>.

G. Palmer



Nicolai Kalenov,  
Oleg Zaiken