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by Kit Brown-Hoekstra

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The report on the Columbia Disaster was truly impressive, not only for its thoroughness and sensitivity, but for its attention to effective information design, and the fact that the writers/editors had a difficult subject, a very tight schedule, and a huge number of people to coordinate with…Read more.

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Feature

Tips for Developing Effective Technical Reports

BY KIT BROWN-HOEKSTRA

I judged technical reports and other documents for many years in the STC Publications Competitions. There was one report that stood out for me as an exemplar of what a technical report should be.

The report on the Columbia Disaster was truly impressive, not only for its thoroughness and sensitivity, but for its attention to effective information design, and the fact that the writers/editors had a difficult subject, a very tight schedule, and a huge number of people to coordinate with.

While technical reports vary significantly in length, based on the complexity of the topic and the needs of the audience, their primary purpose is to provide in-depth information to the reader about a particular project/investigation/research experiment, often one that is outside the reader's technical bailiwick.

In some cases, as with disaster reports, some of the audience might have a particular political agenda or bias regarding the findings. In this situation, it is especially important that the writer presents the topic objectively and clearly, while clearly stating assumptions and limitations.

Components of a Technical Report

Regardless of length, an effective technical report contains the following elements:

- Title/Cover Page
- Table of Contents
- Forward by the Project Sponsor (optional)
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Description of the Subject
- Methods
- Assumptions/Limitations
- Results
- Analysis/Discussion
- Cost/Schedule (if applicable)
- Recommendations
- Glossary
- Index (if it's more than 50 pages)
- Appendices of Supporting Information (optional)

Front/Back Matter

The Title Page/Cover Page, Table of Contents (TOC), and Index help readers navigate to the portions of the report that they are most interested in. The TOC and Index should contain at least two, but not more than three levels of headings.

The Forward, which is usually written by the project sponsor or lead executive helps the reader understand why the project/investigation/etc. was important and puts the project into the larger context of the organization or industry.

Executive Summary

Busy executives need to know the gist of what's going on, but don't have time (and often lack the technical expertise) to read through the details. An executive summary provides the important information about the project, including issues, costs, recommendations, and requests for action, but is typically about 5-10% of the size of the report.

For example, if the main part of the report is 10 pages, the executive summary will typically be 1 page, but a 100-page report will likely have an executive summary of no more than 5-6 pages. (If you can't explain your report or project in less than 10 pages, you need to rethink your explanations.) Though the executive summary typically appears at the beginning of the report, it is written last.

Introduction

The introduction provides the answers to the who, what, when, where, and why questions, sets the framework for the report, and provides context for the project. The introduction is usually 1-3 pages long and includes the following sub-sections:

- Background
- Purpose
- Scope

The first paragraph of the introduction should explain the context of the project, and grab the reader's attention. For example, the introduction to the Columbia report says:

> *The Columbia Accident Investigation Board's independent investigation into the tragic February 1, 2003, loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia and its seven-member crew lasted nearly seven months and involved 13 Board members, approximately 120 Board investigators, and thousands of NASA and support personnel. Because the events that initiated the accident were not apparent for some time, the investigation's depth and breadth were unprecedented in NASA history.*

In these 2 sentences, you find out who was involved in the investigation, how long it took, and get a hint at the complexity of the subject matter.

The Background section places the project into the larger context. For complex reports, you can create side bars that provide the background for a particular area as you are discussing it. The Columbia report does this very effectively by briefly explaining the components of the shuttle and giving an overview of NASA, immediately before talking about the accident itself. This technique familiarizes the reader with the technical and political aspects of the program before delving into the details of the accident.

Purpose and Scope provide the reasons for the project and the limitations that the project has.

Description of the Subject
In the case of the Columbia report, Part 1: The Accident is devoted to describing the subject matter in detail, so that the reader completely understands the context and events leading up to the accident. For shorter reports, this section might be several paragraphs, rather than the several chapters needed in the Columbia report.

Methods, Assumptions/Limitations, and Results

In the Columbia report, this information is primarily found in Chapters 3 and 4. Though Chapter 3 is called Accident Analysis, it is primarily a report of how the investigation was conducted and what was found. The true analysis and discussion happens in Part 2: Why the Accident Occurred.

Like any research report, it is important to identify how you approached the problem, and to be precise and accurate in reporting your findings. Graphics and tables can help the reader understand complex data more easily. Assumptions/Limitations are important for ensuring the reader understands how you approached the issue and what constraints you had in conducting the project. You want to be as objective as possible.

Analysis/Discussion

This section is where you can start giving your own opinion about the investigation/project, based on your interpretation of the results. It is important to back up your assertions with specific examples from the results.

Recommendations
Recommendations should provide the reader with a course of action, and be backed up by the results. For short reports, a brief, 1-2 sentence explanation at the beginning of the section, followed by a set of bulleted lists (I like to sort them topically and by priority) might be sufficient.

For complex investigations, such as the Columbia report, you need to provide more information. In the Columbia example, Chapters 9 and 10 summarized the significant

observations, making detailed recommendations for each one. In addition, Chapter 11 provided a coded list of the recommendations, so that the reader could review all the recommendations and then refer to the sections where they were discussed in detail.

Writing Style

The principles of good technical communication apply:

- Keep it simple
- Be clear
- Be concise
- Use active voice
- Minimize the use of jargon
- Know your audience

Jargon, if it must be used to preserve the technical integrity of the topic, should be defined in a glossary.

Conclusion

An effective technical report provides information in such a way that it clarifies a complex topic, and makes the recommendations and reasons behind them understandable to the audience. Since decision makers often use technical reports to determine an appropriate course of action, it is important to provide enough detail so that the decision path is clear.

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Kit Brown-Hoekstra is Principal of Comgenesis, LLC, editor of this newsletter, an Associate Fellow in the Society for Technical Communication, and a former manager and judge for the STC publications competitions at both a local and international level.

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Tools

HATs Off to CMSes?

BY NEIL PERLIN

Do software documentation groups need a CMS or is there a simpler, cheaper, or better alternative?

Does your company's documentation group create online help for its software products? Online manuals for field service or tech support? If so, then the group probably uses one of the well-known help authoring tools (HATs) like Adobe RoboHelp, MadCap Flare, or Component One Doc-To-Help.

This type of tool has been with us since 1991. Since then, they've gone from being seen as new and exotic to seen as a familiar part of a technical writer's toolkit. They offer numerous features, let writers convert almost any type of information from hard-copy to online, are inexpensive ($800 - $1,000 per seat), and easy to learn (three days of formal training is enough to get new writers going).

That's nice… So where am I going?

We often hear about silos in IT. Consider the case of CMSes versus HATs, two different and unrelated technologies, right? Not necessarily…

Issues with CMSes

As HATs have become a familiar part of online documentation work, buzz has moved to CMSes. CMSes are cutting-edge. They support XML, DITA, multi-author development, single sourcing multi-channel publishing, and more cool things, and are being pushed hard at documentation groups. But CMSes also have some serious drawbacks for many documentation groups.

Expensive: Different studies and articles come up with very different costs for purchase, implementation, training, and maintenance, but they're all at least one order of magnitude greater than a HAT. This can be a major issue for documentation groups that have to sweat bullets to get the budget for a few copies of a $1,000 HAT and now have to ask for $100,000 for a new tool to let them do basically the same tasks.

Technically demanding: Using a CMS can call for more technical knowledge than other documentation tools. Writers don't need to understand HTML or XML to create hard-copy documentation in Word, or online help in a HAT. (Although without at least a basic understanding of what they're doing — "What is a CSS, anyway, and why do we need one?" — it's easy for writers to make some really colossal mistakes.) CMSes can certainly be set up to spare the writers from seeing most of the technical details, but there will still be some new and unfamiliar features and concepts that they need to understand.

Workflow changes: Adopting a CMS can change workflows or formalize once informal processes, like reviews. People can have trouble dealing with change, and documentation has been swamped in recent years by the shift to HTML, then XML, DITA, structured authoring, single sourcing, multi-channel publishing, and "now what…?".

Cultural misfit: CMS operations may clash with the culture of a documentation group or the larger company. It will take time for MS Word shops or groups that are just going online to adapt to the new environment. The need for authoring standards will cause problems if writers resist being "boxed in." The need for training to get writers up to speed fast will cause problems in companies with a history of telling writers to "just figure it out…"

These problems, and more, mean that implementing a CMS may be far harder than many documentation groups anticipate. On several occasions, I've talked to clients who

spent almost $150,000 on a CMS only to see it become â€œshelfwareâ€ in the CTOâ€™s office due to technical, workflow, or cultural problems.

Where do HATs fit in here?

Despite the name, HATs long ago moved past their help authoring roots. Theyâ€™ve always offered content editing, the ability to import files created in Word and Framemaker, to customize content through conditionality, version control, and various output options ranging from Microsoft Windows Help to Microsoft HTML Help, JavaHelp, WebHelp, and more.

New versions of the tools offer or are heading toward CMS-style features:

- repositories
- review control
- content customization through variables (and variables that can call and nest other variables)
- centralization of project control files
- SWF integration
- etc.

These feature similarities between HATs and CMSes offer two benefits for documentation groups considering migrating to a CMS.

CMS simulation: A documentation group that uses a HAT can use it to create simulated, test-bed CMSes. This lets the group identify and correct gaps in writersâ€™ technical skills, workflow problems, or cultural-fit problems before spending time and a lot of money on a â€œrealâ€ CMS.

CMS substitute: A documentation group might be able to use its HAT as a lightweight but real CMS.

The results? Creating a test-bed CMS will help documentation groups move to a CMS with open eyes. Using a HAT as a real CMS will help documentation groups stay in a familiar environment, but make better use of it, while minimizing cost and disruption.

If youâ€™re using a HAT now, donâ€™t give up on it until you find out what it can really do. You may be surprised.

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This article originally appeared in SD Times *on 2 December 2008. Neil Perlin is president of Hyper/Word Services (www.hyperword.com) of Tewksbury, MA. He has 30 years experience in technical communication, with 24 years in training, consulting, and development for online formats and tools like WinHelp, HTML Help, JavaHelp, CE Help, RoboHelp, Flare, Mimic, Captivate, and others now known only in legend. Neil is a member of IEEE and STC, an associate fellow of the STC, and the founder and manager of the Beyond the Bleeding Edge stem that ran at the STC annual conference from 1999 to 2006.*

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Writing

Don't Let Good Grammar Spoil Good Writing

BY PHILIP YAFFE

If saying that good grammar can spoil good writing sounds like heresy, it was meant to.

When I search the Web for writing tips, all too often the first bit of advice that comes back is, "Be sure to use good grammar". But that's putting the cart before the horse. It's like telling a carpenter which hammer to use to drive in a particular type of nail. Very useful advice. However, this is a detail. It is valid only if the carpenter knows why he is putting the nail there and what will follow.

There is a second reason why this bit of advice is misplaced. One person's idea of good grammar is not necessarily another's.

The English language is not blessed (or cursed) with the equivalent of the Académie Française, a more or less official body in France that regulates the French language. Differences about correct grammar are sometimes hotly argued within the Académie, but outside their decisions are accepted as law.

English grammarians also are continually arguing with each other. There is of course broad agreement on many things. However, when there isn't, you can pretty much do as you like.

Over my 40-year career as a writer, I have purposely chosen to "violate" some aspects of English grammar that many people consider to be inviolable. Why? Because I believe their rigorous application often impedes emphasis and/or understanding.

I would like to share some of these with you. You may never have thought about them before, so here is your opportunity. Once you have reflected on the matters, you may accept or reject them as the mood takes you.

Although I am a native of Southern California, I have been living in Brussels, Belgium, for the past 34 years. In Europe, British English is generally preferred to American English, so I am quite accustomed to seeing the language used somewhat differently from what I knew before I came here.

Past vs. Present Tense

One of my particular pet peeves is something I hear daily on the BBC, the prestigious British Broadcasting Corporation. This is not a condemnation of British vs. American English. It's just that I became aware of the practice while listening to the BBC. Americans do pretty much the same thing.

What am I talking about? The annoying, even ludicrous, stricture that if a sentence starts in the past tense, it must remain in the past tense.

For example, " The United Nations this morning reported that malaria 'was' still a worldwide health menace". To me, it makes much more sense to say, "The United Nations this morning disclosed that malaria 'is' still a worldwide health menace".

Or, what about this? "The President asserted that the economy 'was' going to remain strong at least until 2011". Again, it makes much more sense to say, "The President asserted that the economy 'is' going to remain strong at least until 2010".

This practice is relatively harmless; nevertheless, I cringe at it. Clearly, the speaker didn't mean to suggest that the situation was likely to change almost the instant he had uttered his statement. He was projecting into the future. So, while he may have said it five minutes ago (past tense), it seems ludicrous to paraphrase his statement in the past tense, which only diminishes its force.

If you believe that casting the beginning of a sentence in the past tense, then the rest in the present or future tense is bad grammar, you are in poor company. When the logic of the situation calls for it, many good writers and speakers ignore the "rule". The above examples were, in fact, taken from two the world's leading international daily newspapers.

Capitalizing and Punctuating Bullet Points

The purpose of bullet points is to make thoughts and information stand out. So why go against the current by not capitalizing the first letter of each point and by removing punctuation? For example:

Example A.

Our system helps people:
-- write better;
-- write faster;
-- write persuasively;
-- reduce errors;
-- reduce formatting problems.

You will notice that in addition to capitalizing each bullet point, example B (below) also eliminates the semi-colons and the period. What logic is there for putting in commas semi-colons, and periods? The fact that the next line is a new bullet point, i.e., clearly a new thought, makes such punctuation unnecessary, and even distracting.

Example B.

Our system helps people:
-- Write better
-- Write faster
-- Write persuasively
-- Reduce errors
-- Reduce formatting problems

Of course, it can be contended that each bullet point is a continuation of the main sentence, so starting with a capital would be incorrect. Likewise, each bullet point is the end of a thought, so punctuation is necessary. Valid arguments, for a grammarian. However, for a writer whatever weakens the power of bullet points negates the reason for using them in the first place. Capitalizing and inserting punctuation both tend to weaken bullets points, and therefore should be avoided. Example C (below) shows the preferred method.

Example C.

Our system helps people:
-- write better
-- write faster
-- write persuasively
-- reduce errors
-- reduce formatting problems

Names and Titles

My final grammatical pet peeve may not be grammatical at all. It has to do with how people are introduced in a document. I am not certain there is any "rule" governing this; it is more a matter of choice.

Example A.

The president of the International Federation of Tuba Players, John Jones, has just celebrated his 18th year of service.

Example B.

John Jones, president of the International Federation of Tuba Players, has just celebrated his 18th year of service.

Both A and B are legitimate ways of introducing John Jones. Some good writers choose the one, some choose the other. I would like to argue that in most cases, B is probably preferable because it is more "natural". After all, at a party you wouldn't say to someone, "I would like to introduce you to the president of the International Federation of Tuba Players, John Jones." Preferably you would say, "I would like to introduce you to John Jones, president of the International Federation of Tuba Players."

Paragraphing

This article is full of a heresy that many grammarians would be happy to chastise me for -- and have.

You may have noticed that many of the paragraphs are quite short, even only one sentence. I am certain that you didn't learn paragraphing like this in school, and would have been marked down if you had tried it.

Some people who use "ungrammatically" short paragraphs claim that they help maintain reader interest, because readers dislike large blocks of text. This is true. However, there is an even better reason for using them. Short paragraphs help to dramatize certain key idea, thereby enhancing clarity.

The first paragraph of this section is a case in point.

The sentence starting "This article is full of a heresy that . . ." could easily have been combined with the next sentence starting "You may have noticed that many of the paragraphs are quite short . . ." to form a single paragraph. This is probably what most grammarians would do and insist that others do, as well. However, some of the emphasis of that first sentence would have been lost, to the detriment of clarity.

If you have doubts about using such unorthodox paragraphing, look at any leading newspapers and magazine for reassurance. Short, dramatic paragraphing is one of the things that make these popular publications so easy and enjoyable to read.

* *

Philip Yaffe *is a former reporter/feature writer with The Wall Street Journal and a marketing communication consultant. He currently teaches a course in good writing and good speaking in Brussels, Belgium. His recently published book* In the "I" of the Storm: the Simple Secrets of Writing & Speaking (Almost) like a Professional *is available from Story Publishers in Ghent, Belgium (storypublishers.be) and Amazon (amazon.com).*

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Project Management

Who's Shaking Your Snow Globe ?

BY MICHELLE LABROSSE

When I think about what's happening in the world right now, it reminds me of those snow globes that I had as a kid. The world is calm and serene in the little village until someone shakes the snow globe, and then in an instant the world changes.

There are two ways to handle change. One way is to keep doing what you were doing and ignore the change that is happening. The other way is to forget about the old way of doing things, embrace the snow and set up some new rules for your wintry world.

Let's take a look at some of the old rules that have defined many of us over the last decade, and new rules that can bring us forward. Then, we'll look at our role as Project Managers in creating value in any environment -- serene or shaken.

Old Rules

The old rules focused on getting ahead with "OPM" -- other people's money, and winning was defined by "stuff." Whoever has most toys wins. Like a Ponzi scheme, this is a short-term game that doesn't build long-term value or happiness.

Create Money for Yourself
The Old "Rules"

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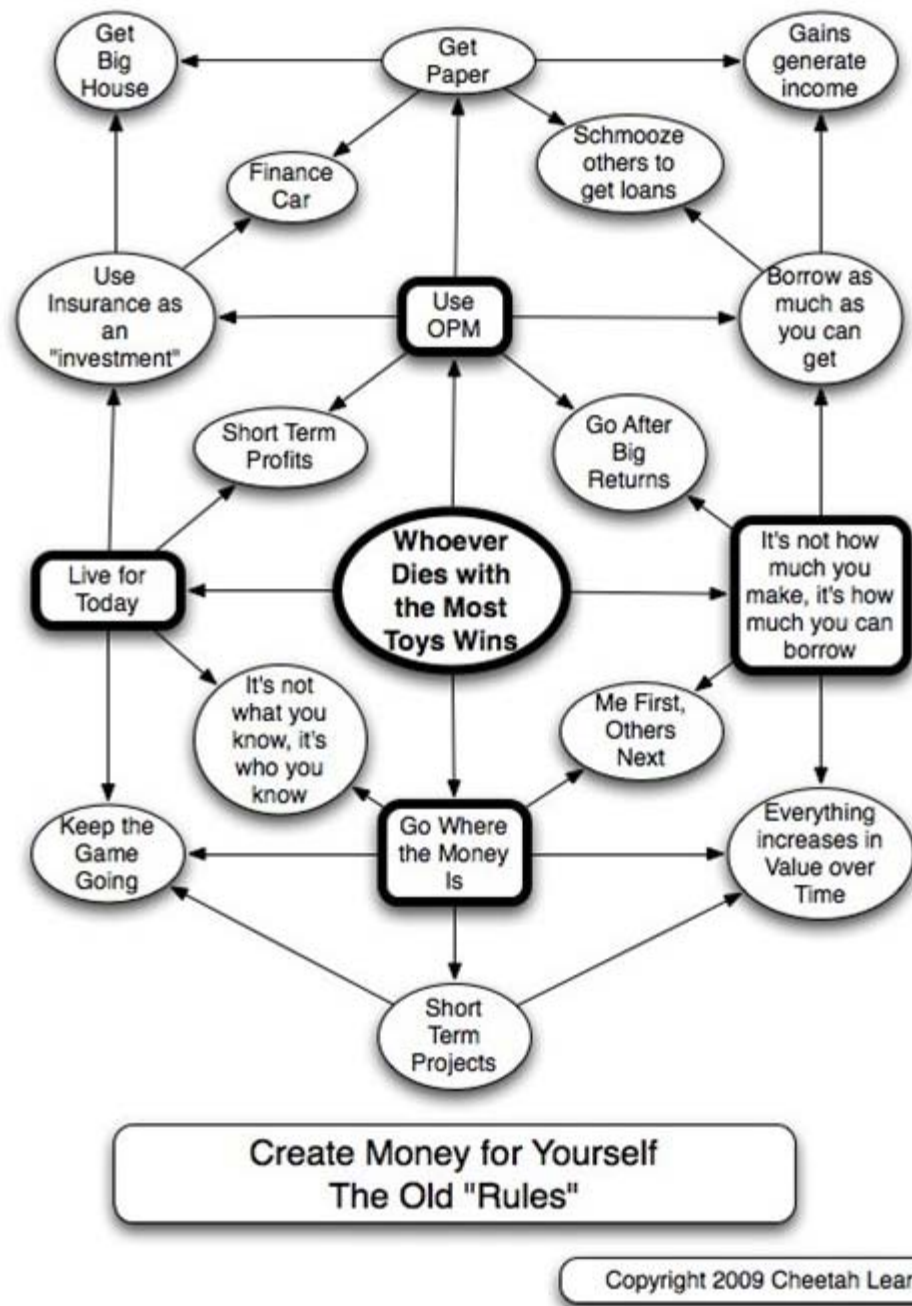
New Rules

I'd like to propose some new rules that will let us all move forward, begin thinking in new ways and create value for ourselves and those around us.

Create Value for Yourself and Others
The New "Rules"

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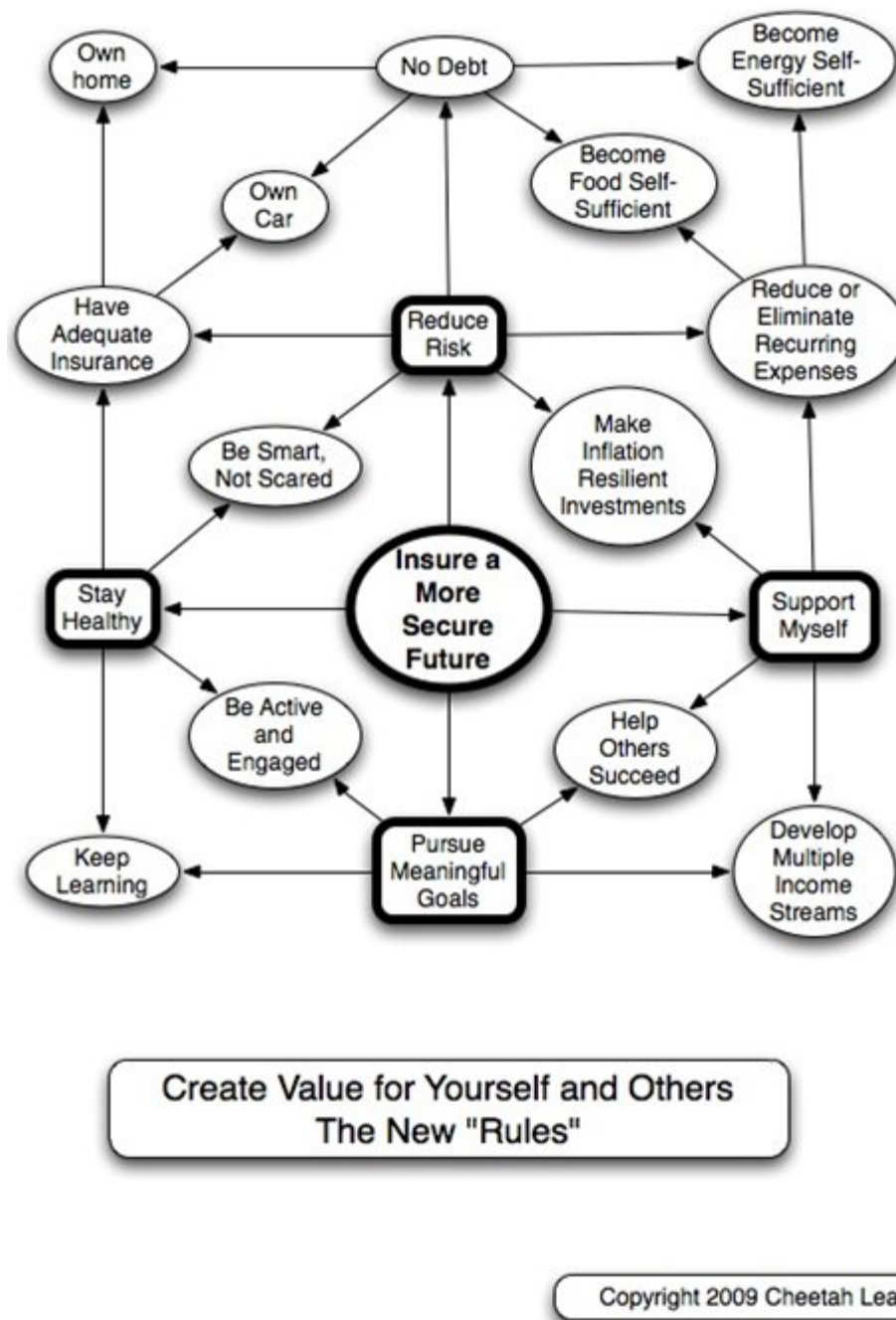
Super Hero or Just a Good Project Manager?

When the snow globe has been shaken, who are the most valuable people to have on your team? It's people who know how to get things done, talk the frantic folks down out of the tree and get the team moving again on a new terrain. Sound familiar? That person is probably you. While you may not wear a leotard into work with a big PM on your chest, people will see you as a Super Hero if you can bring some of the new rules into being.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How can I create more value for other people, FAST?
- How can I reduce or eliminate risks (including cost overruns) on my projects?
- How can I better leverage my skills to create more value for others?
- How can I find the opportunities that are best for me?
- Are the goals and commitments I had in the past right for me now?
- How can I help people on my team and in my family become more successful?
- How can I be healthier, so I'm operating at my best?
- How can I be the project manager and team member who succeeds while helping others to succeed?

Answer these questions and ease on the down the road with your new set of rules. Then, when the world gets shaken, you're ready to go.

Keep Your Skills Up to Date and Get 20% Off

In this environment, it's important to make sure your Project Management skills are at their best. Let Cheetah Learning help you with 20% off our 45 hour/PDU online course, *Capitalize on the Recession*. Use the promotion code **Snowglobe** and get 20% off until May 15, 2009.

Chief Cheetah Podcast Is Yours for the Downloading

Want to hear what Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, and Chief Cheetah has to say about the old rules versus the new rules? Download our podcast at http://podcast.cheetahlearning.com/podcastgen/ and hear the words straight from the Cheetah's mouth.

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About the Know How Network and Cheetah Learning

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About the Author

Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is founder and Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning and author of Cheetah Negotiations and Cheetah Project Management. The Project Management Institute selected Michelle as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the World and one of only two women from the training and education industry.

Cheetah Learning is a virtual company and has 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. Michelle has run her company virtually for the past 20 years, growing it 100-fold in the past 20 years. She credits her success to using Cheetah's Project Management method to better manage people and technology, and has made it fast, easy and fun for more than 30,000 people to learn and do Project Management.

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Around IEEE

Editor's Note: Tom Wiener came to our AdCom meeting to talk about this project. He's looking for volunteers to help with it. It sounds like a cool project.

GEO, GEOSS, and the IEEE

BY TOM WIENER

GEO and GEOSS are part of an international effort to use Earth observation data to benefit the world by improving living conditions in developing countries, and through GEOSS, to provide information on global resources to decision makers at all levels.

IEEE's Role

IEEE has a leading role as a Participating Organization in the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). It is the lead organization for 12 of the tasks in the development of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The IEEE is also co-chairing two of the four committees guiding GEOSS development.

IEEE's exemplary performance as a Participating in GEO is drawing kudos, leading to requests for help from several countries and the European Commission. IEEE is acting through the IEEE Committee on Earth Observation (www.ieee-earth.org).

Current Projects

IEEE plays a significant role in several interesting projects, including the four highlighted here:

- GEOPortal
- SAVEEARTH game
- Earthzine
- Water for the World

All of these projects need additional volunteers and provide a great opportunity for IEEE members to get involved.

GEOPortal

The 'GEOPortal' provides a single Internet access point for users seeking data, imagery, and analytical software packages relevant to all parts of the globe. The development of the GEOPortal and the related standards and interoperability arrangements has been led by the IEEE. It connects users to existing databases and portals and provides reliable, up-to-date and user-friendly information — vital for the work of decision makers, planners, and emergency managers. For users with limited or no access to the Internet, similar information is available via the 'GEONETCast' network of telecommunication satellites.

SAVEEARTH game

The IEEE, with substantial involvement of the Computer Society, is conducting a contest to build a computer game, the *SAVEEARTH Game*, based on Earth Observations. The game's objective is to manage development in a sustainable fashion on two separate continents. The results of the game depend on real-time integration of actual earth observations.

It is a two-phase competition. Phase I, with an entry deadline of **10 April 10 2009**, calls for the suggestions for a computer game to show how using earth observations can make the world a better place.

The game design needs to consider how the following areas affect the Earth:

- Disasters
- Health
- Energy
- Climate
- Water
- Weather
- Ecosystems
- Agriculture
- Biodiversity

For the second phase of the competition, with entries due in **June 2009**, technical teams build a playable prototype game. Whether you are a student or a professional, enter the contest now. For more details, go to http://www.saveearthgame.org/.

Earthzine

Earthzine (www.earthzine.org), an IEEE-sponsored Web magazine, fosters earth observation and global awareness. It provides general and specific information on societal issues and sustainability for the general public. Its technical level is similar to *IEEE Spectrum*, and is a task in the *GEO Work Plan* for developing GEOSS. *Earthzine*, like the SAVEEARTH Game Contest, increase public awareness about GEO, the development of GEOSS, and the importance of Earth observations in making the world a better place to live.

Water for the World

The IEEE, through the ICEO, and supported by the New Initiative Committee, has initiated Water for the World to provide a view of the problems, science and engineering challenges, and opportunities in providing fresh water resources to regional and global populations. It is a 3-phase program.

Phase One, now complete, developed an Actionable Vision to bring Water to the World. It focuses on engineering and innovation, drawing on the extensive work that has already been done at regional and international levels.

One of the solutions suggested by Phase One's Actionable Vision involves conducting Pilot Projects to demonstrate the efficacy of the proposed approaches.

In Phase Two, the 16 proposed Pilot Projects will be persistent, sustainable, repeatable, and scalable. ICEO is now pursuing funding for their implementation. ICEO plans to enroll various regional and international authorities in the location of the Phase Two Pilot Projects.

Phase Three, building on the successes and the lessons of Phase Two, will be the basis for the institutionalization of the solutions proposed in the Actionable Vision. Our goal is to provide internationally accepted programs to Bring Water to the World, owned and directed by an international body.

Background

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) (www.earthobservations.org) was established in February 2005 by the Third Earth Observation Summit in Brussels. GEO was launched in response to calls for action by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Group of Eight (G8) leading industrialized countries. These high-level meetings recognized that international collaboration is essential for exploiting the growing potential of Earth observations to support decision making in an increasingly complex and environmentally stressed world.

GEO is a voluntary partnership of governments and international organizations. It provides a framework within which these partners can develop new projects and coordinate their strategies and investments. As of February 2009, GEO's Members include 76 governments and the European Commission. In addition, 56 intergovernmental, international, and regional organizations with a mandate in Earth observation or related issues, including the IEEE, have been recognized as Participating Organizations. Members make voluntary financial contributions to GEO.

GEO is coordinating efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) on the basis of a *10-Year Implementation Plan*.

Adopted by the Third Earth Observation Summit, the Plan runs from 2005 to 2015. It defines a vision statement for GEOSS, its purpose and scope, expected benefits, nine "Societal Benefit Areas" (disasters, health, energy, climate, water, weather, ecosystems, agriculture and biodiversity), technical and capacity building priorities, and

the GEO governance structure.

To measure progress and maintain momentum, the Plan also sets out 107 two-year targets, 83 six-year targets and 56 ten-year targets. These are realized in the GEO 2009-2011 Work Plan.

GEO-I established four Committees to guide the implementation of the 10-Year Plan. The Committees address themes that cut across, and are relevant to, each of the nine issue-specific Social Benefit Areas. These four permanent bodies are the Architecture and Data, Science and Technology, User Interface, and Capacity Building Committees. The IEEE co-chairs the Architecture and Data Committee and the User Interface Committee.

Conclusion

As the work progresses, more IEEE Societies are taking the responsibility of directing, managing, and supporting individual work plan tasks. For example, the Oceanic Engineering Society is working to develop the Ocean Observing System. The Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society has taken responsibility for a Health Monitoring and Reporting task. There are additional opportunities.

The IEEE is demonstrating the breadth and power of its volunteer membership to serve society in a major global development activity in support of world sustainability. The IEEE culture of accomplishment places it disproportionally in positions of leadership. The understanding of the technical details needed to assemble GEOSS and the appreciation of the difficulties and opportunities presented by the gigantic and complex integration needed for GEOSS are both present in the technical breadth of IEEE's Field of Interest.

Further, the global reach of IEEE's membership provides precisely the base needed to support Capacity Building activities that are the purposes of GEO. You can join other IEEE volunteers in this important work by emailing ICEO at iceovolunteers AT ieee DOT org .

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Dr. Thomas F. Wiener (www.thomasfwiener.org) is an Aerospace Engineer with over 40 years of increasing responsibility in conducting and directing high technology research and development efforts. Now the Principal of the Forté Consultancy, he was a Program Manager in the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency for 10 years. He served in the U.S. Navy for over 22 years, qualified in Destroyers and in Submarines. He commanded the nuclear attack submarine USS JACK. His special technical proficiencies span the fields of missile technology, inertial guidance and automatic control, imaging and non-imaging sensors, and C3I. He has acquired substantial expertise in training and education in the Navy and in civilian life.

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◆IEEE **Newsletter** PCS

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President's Column

President's column

BY MARK HASELKORN

For information on what's happening in PCS, see the AdCom News page.

* *

Mark Haselkorn is the current President of IEEE-PCS, and works as Professor and Founding Chair, Department of Technical Communication; Director, Pacific Rim Visualization and Analytics Center; Director, Interdisciplinary Program on Humanitarian Relief at the University of Washington.

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Editor's Column

Changes Coming

BY KIT BROWN-HOEKSTRA

It's hard to believe, but it's been almost 6 years since we pulled the newsletter online and redesigned it as an electronic publication. It's been almost 2 years since Brian Still and Sandy Bartell pulled the PCS community site into Drupal, an open-source, web content management system.

Now, at long last, we will be migrating the newsletter to Drupal sometime this summer. We have the design worked out, and Brian Still is working hard to build the site, and to help me devise the workflow so that we can easily manage the newsletter content.

A couple of new features will be available:

- Readers will be able to comment on each article.
- Archives will be searchable.
- Current issues will be locked down for members only (You might want to make sure your PCS membership is up to date!)

Here's a sneak peek at what the newsletter will look like:
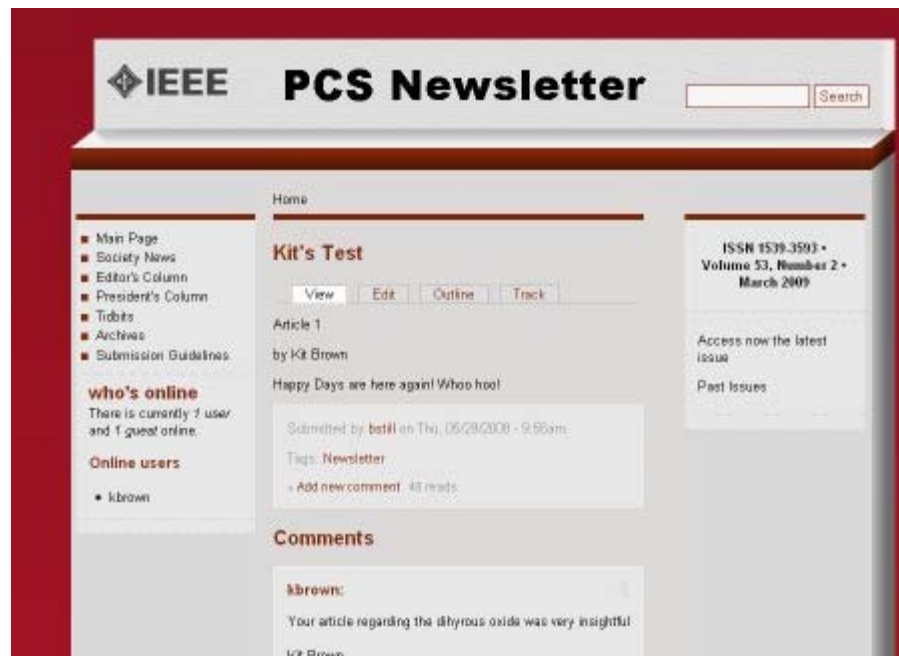
Along with the design changes, we will be moving some standard newsletter content into the PCS community pages, and allowing members to upload content, which I will moderate. This change is an effort to provide time-critical information more quickly.

The following sections will move to the PCS Community:

- Jobs
- Calls for Papers/Articles
- Conference Announcements
- Education/ Training Opportunities

Once the move is complete, we hope to add some new content features and to continue to evolve the newsletter.

I'm really excited about these changes, and eternally grateful to Brian for his diligent effort on this project.

If you have questions or comments, please contact me at pcsnews DOT editor AT ieee DOT org .

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This Issue's Content

Book/Web Site Reviews

Editor's Note: Several IEEE members have written books of interest to PCS members. If you would like to have it reviewed by a newsletter volunteer, please contact Kit Brown at pcsnews.editor AT ieee DOT org.

Reviews will return next month.

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This Issue's Content

Tidbits

Editor's Note: I am always looking for strange, fun, or interesting technical communication tidbits. Please contribute freely.

Playing with Toys for a Living

FROM *SPECTRUM TECH ALERT*, 2 APRIL 2009

"You don’t have to be an A student to land your dream job; you just have to be incredibly persistent and keep your eyes on the prize. Take, for example, a self-proclaimed former B student, Shannon Bruzelius, who’s now living his dream at Wild Planet Toys in San Francisco… Tekla Perry has the story"….. Listen to podcast .

ExpertNow Has a Newsletter

CONTRIBUTED BY JULIA WILLIAMS

You can find out what's going on with ExpertNow, the eLearning modules that IEEE produces, by reading their newsletter. The newsletter highlights new modules and customer feedback…Read more.

Ion Teleportation and Quantum Computers

FROM *IEEE SPECTRUM TECH ALERT* , 29 JANUARY 2009

"Though we’re accustomed to thinking of the Star Trek version of teleporting, what physicists call teleportation is the exact mapping of one particle’s quantum characteristics onto another particle. That matters because future quantum computers and quantum cryptography networks will need some way of storing data and moving it around"….Read more.

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Job Announcements

Editor's Note: We have had several requests to post job openings. If you would like to post your opening, please send the job announcement in a Word document with minimal formatting to Kit at pcsnews.editor@ieee.org. The jobs will remain on the list until the closing date listed in the announcement.

Proposal Writer/Manager

Position:	Proposal Writer/Mgr
Company:	JEM Communications, LLC
Location:	Columbus, Mississippi, USA
Salary Range:	$60-80,000 USD
Experience Required:	minimum 7 years
Contact:	Jane Smith, www.jemcommunications.com
Deadline to Apply:	open until filled

The Proposal Manager is responsible for the quality, compliance, and timeliness of technical and cost proposals throughout the proposal development lifecycle.

Position is in the area of Aerospace / Aviation / Defense.

The Proposal Manager performs the following duties:

- analyzes and scrubs RFPs (Requests for Proposals)
- develops outlines and compliance matrices
- develops and manages the proposal schedules
- initiates and facilitates all meetings and reviews
- serves as the primary point of contact for authors and teammates regarding proposal activities
- writes or edits corporate information, résumés, project descriptions
- proofreads and edits material submitted by authors to ensure a quality document is being distributed to reviewers and ultimately the customer.
- On some proposals, the Proposal Manager may perform as a volume lead for technical, management, or
  cost areas.

The Proposal Manager has responsibility to manage all phases of the proposal development process in response to US Government RFPs. The Proposal Manager manages the following:

- all aspects of proposal preparation, revision and submission
- coordinates inputs from technical, contracts, and finance departments
- coordinates internal reviews with upper management

Education, Experience and Skills

- BA/BS and minimum 7 years of applicable experience
- Working knowledge of DOD (Department of Defense) contract types and FAR (Federal Acquisition Regulation)
- Project management skills
- Ability to work independently as well as part of a team
- Capability to prepare winning proposals under tight schedule constraints and prioritize multiple tasks efficiently and effectively
- Written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills
- Word processing and desktop publishing experience

- Attention to detail, including proofreading and editing skills
- Ability to coordinate and report on all related tasks of customer procurements
- Understanding of US Government contracting and proposal processes
- Experience as a contracting officer a plus
- Availability to work some evenings and weekends to meet changing schedules

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Society News: PCS Events

Call for Papers for IPCC 2009

BY BRENDA HUETTNER

Proposals are due by 1 February 2009!!!

What do our practical experiences, theories, and research tell us about what constitutes "Po'okela," or "Commitment to Excellence," in the communication of technical information? How can we best define, measure, and achieve that excellence? The 2009 International Professional Communication Conference provides a unique forum for professionals from both industry and academia to explore possible answers and share their ideas and knowledge.

For more information, go to the website: http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/?q=node/377 or contact Brenda Huettner at bphuettner@ieee.org .

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Society News: Member News

Member Benefit: Download White Papers

FROM IEEE

IEEE Spectrum Online now offers free White Papers with in-depth technology industry research.

Learn more about the technologies that interest you from the authoritative voices within your field.

Don't miss out on this valuable IEEE Member benefit - download a FREE whitepaper today!

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Society News: AdCom News

Meeting in Terra Haute, Indiana

BY ADCOM

Front Row (L to R): Julia Williams, Muriel Zimmerman, Mark Haselkorn, Tom Orr. **2nd Row (L to R):** George Hayhoe, Sandy Bartell, Marj Davis. **3rd Row (L to R):** Brenda Huettner, Michael Steehouder, Jo Mackiewicz. **4th Row (L to R):** Tom Wiener, Helen Grady, Kit Brown-Hoekstra. 5th **Row (L to R):** Wally Lee, Marie Paretti. **Back Row (L to R):** Atsuko Yamazaki, Debbie Davy.

On 6-7 March 2009, the PCS AdCom met at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terra Haute, Indiana.

Tom Wiener was a guest speaker, and presented on IEEE's involvement in GEO and GEOSS (see Around IEEE).

Other items discussed included the following:

- ExpertNow modules (we are working on a couple)
- Budget for next year
- AdCom Elections
- Conference planning (Hawaii 2009, The Netherlands 2010, Cincinnati, Ohio in 2011)
- Membership (how to engage members)
- Publications and web site
- Awards (these will be announced at the conference in July)

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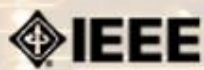
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Calls for Articles/Proposals/Courses

Call for Articles: Technical Communication special issue

Call for Nominations to IEEE Positions and Committees

Call for Proposals: *Information Overload*

Certificate in Writing Technical Information

AIIM Online Courses

Trademark Law webinar **FREE!**

SEO Optimization webinar **FREE!**

Open University Discount for PCS members

LeaderPoint Executive Experience

Mentors Needed

IEEE Educational Opportunities

Technical Communication Special Issue

Title:	*Technical Communication,* special issue on "Legal Issues in Global Contexts"
Editors:	Kirk St. Amant Martine Courant Rife
Contact:	For a full copy of the CFP, email Kirk and Martine at tc DOT special DOT issue AT gmail DOT com
Proposal Due:	1 June 2009 (400-word proposal)
Acceptance Notification:	15 June 2009
Draft Due:	1 October 2009
Final Manuscript Due:	15 February 2010
Publication Date:	November 2010

Submission Guidlines:

Proposals should be no more than 400 words in length. All proposals should include submitter name, affiliation, and email address as well as a working title for the proposed article.

About the Journal:

Technical Communication, the journal of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), is soliciting article proposals for an upcoming special issue that will examine how factors of law and of culture affect how technical communicators work in international and cross-cultural contexts. This special issue will be published in November 2010, and the guest editors are Kirk St.Amant of East Carolina University and Martine Courant Rife of Lansing Community College.

Special Issue Description:

Legal issues are increasingly affecting the work we do as industry practitioners, academic researchers, university and college educators, and independent entrepreneurs in technical communication.

In some cases, these legal issues involve notions of ownership, copyright, and trade secrets. In other instances, legal concerns related to privacy, disclosure, and free speech

affect how technical communicators perform different activities.

These legal issues are further complicated by different cultural perspectives related to working in global environments and to addressing the informational needs of different cultural groups within our own nations.

Very few individuals in technical communication, however, are lawyers or have formal training in issues of law and its intersection with different cultural communication expectations and assumptions.

This special issue of Technical Communication will examine the legal issues affecting technical communication practices related to designing materials for or to working with individuals from other nations and cultures.

IEEE Nominations and Appointments Committee Seeks Recommendations For Officers and Standing Committee Members

Who:	Standing Committee members and IEEE Corporate Officers
Date:	1 July 2009

The IEEE Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee is seeking recommendations for several positions including standing committee chairs and members and IEEE Corporate officers.

Each position has specific job requirements and qualifications on which the N&A Committee evaluates potential candidates. They can be reviewed on the N&A Web site, http://www.ieee.org/web/aboutus/nominations/guidelines.html.

As a reminder, *self-nominations are encouraged*. An individual does not need to be nominated by a colleague in order to be considered.

Nominations can be submitted online at http://www.ieee.org/web/aboutus/nominations/nomform3d.html.

Read more in THE INSTITUTE story Seeking Nominees for Volunteer Positions.

Call for Chapter Proposals: *Information Overload*

Title:	*Information Overload: An International Challenge to Professional Communication Practices*
Editors:	Judith B. Strother, Florida Institute of Technology Jan M. Ulijn, Eindhoven University of Technology Zohra Fazal, Florida Institute of Technology
Call for Papers:	Request a copy from Dr Fazel at zfazal AT fit DOT edu
Proposal Due:	30 April 2009

The computer industry has been working to address the hardware and software challenges posed by the great proliferation of information, for example, through improved search engines and filters, but such technical solutions are beyond the scope of this book. On the other hand, there has been little research on both causes and effects of information overload in the field of business and technical communication. Any resource on improved management of information overload would be a great value to technical and professional communicators in both academia and industry.

The editors of the proposed volume, *Information Overload: An International Challenge to Professional Communication Practices*, want to further our understanding of information overload in corporate settings by exploring the following topics:

- What is information overload, and what causes it?
- What effects do content, media selection, and prevalent mobile technologies have on information overload?
- What are the direct and indirect costs of information overload, and how can they be measured?
- Is there a difference in levels of information overload among various regions or countries, for example, between Europe and the United States?
- What are the effects of information overload?
- What are some knowledge management techniques that could be used to effectively deal with information overload?
- What are some strategies to reduce or control information overload in technical and professional communication situations?

The editors are interested in a range of methodological approaches that may include (but are not limited to) case studies, empirical studies, and usability studies that would inform

writing practices and pedagogical practices. Articles might consider current scholarly work on information overload from a variety of fields including international business, technical and business communication, information architecture, usability engineering, psychology, and educational technology.

Submission Procedure

Prospective authors are invited to submit chapter proposals of about 1000 words on or before **April 30, 2009**. In their proposals, prospective authors should clearly explain the purpose and contents of their proposed chapter and how the chapter would fit into the overall text. Prospective authors should also submit a cover page with the name, affiliation, and full contact information for each author.

Please note that an invitation to submit a chapter proposal for review is not a guarantee that the manuscript will be accepted. Rather, the decision to publish manuscripts will be based upon reviews and assessments by the three editors. Authors will be notified of the status of their proposal and sent chapter organization guidelines by June 30, 2009. Drafts of chapters will be due on October 1, 2009.

Please send inquiries and submit material electronically to Zohra Fazal (e-mail: zfazal AT fit DOT edu) using files in Rich Text (.rtf) or Microsoft Work (.doc) formats.

Certificate in Writing Technical Information

Courses: http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careertraining/Certificates/writingtechinfo.htm
Location: Middlesex Community College, Bedford, MA, USA

MCC's 125-hour Writing Technical Information Certificate is a career enhancement opportunity for individuals who have well-developed writing skills and want to improve their effectiveness in communicating technical information. Classes run one night per week (Thursdays, from 5:45-9:45 pm) and one Saturday (9 am - 5 pm) per semester.

AIIM Online Training Courses

Website: www.aiim.org/training

AIIM Essentials is a series of 4-6 hours educational programs designed to provide you with an unbiased focus on specific topics relevant to today's changing technological and business landscapes.

AIIM ESSENTIALS ONLINE COURSES:

- Web Content Management (WCM)
- SharePoint
- Digital Asset Management (DAM)
- eDiscovery
- PDF/A
- Imaging & Recognition (coming shortly)

The new AIIM Essentials programs have been designed for use as a series of standalone online courses that are focused on very specific topics applicable to any organization, and are a perfect compliment to enhance the training our students have received from our current educational Certificate offerings;

Free Webinar: Trademark Law

Website: http://xiosoftpresenter.com/?eventid=5788029

Entrepreneurial Authors face a very unique set of branding challenges. Branding yourself and your products is tricky enough, but when it comes time to protect that investment of time, money, and emotion authors can be surprised to find out they missed some critical elements of brand planning â€" the factors relating to Trademark Law.

Creative Business Attorney, Kevin E. Houchin, Esq. will give you a foundational knowledge of what to do to protect your current brands and strategies and factors to consider when planning to launch new brands.

Free Webinar: SEO Optimization

Website: http://www.gnc-web-creations.com/seo-optimization.htm

The SEO Training Class helps small business owners learn the basics of search engine optimization to increase the visibility of their business in the search engines. By combining these techniques with excellent marketing skills, you will be well on your way to building a successful online business.

Once we accept your membership request to join the class, you will begin receiving the

SEO training lessons in your email. All replies and assistance, along with necessary clarifications, are posted in that group. These SEO lessons are step-by-step tutorials which teach you to optimize your site from the ground floor up.

You never have to worry about falling behind in the training class. When we finish the course we start over, back at the beginning. As long as you remain active, there is no limit to how many SEO training class sessions you may attend!

10% Discount on Classes through Open University

Website: http://www.open.ac.uk/cpd/index.php?q=node/49

IEEE-PCS members (because of PCS' affiliation with INTECOM) receive a special course fee with the OU, which allows PCS members to study Open University's short web-based CPD courses at a discount of 10% off the published course fee. If you are interested in any of the courses, please click on the relevant link for information about the course and how to register. Read more.

AIIM Certificate courses in ECM Best Practices

Courses: http://www.aiim.org/education/certificate.asp
Location: various locations and online

Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is about managing your information assets. It is a framework which enables the management of information assets across an organization, and ties in platforms and programs including:

- Capture/Imaging
- Electronic Document Management
- Electronic Record Management
- Business Process Management
- Collaboration
- Web Content Management
- Digital Asset Management.

The Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Certificate Program reflects the global best practices in use across our 50,000 members. The program covers the strategies, tools, and technologies used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver information in support of business processes.

- Learn global best practices for planning and implementing ECM
- Discover real world solutions and best practices for challenges you face
- Learn from experts in the field who are able to answer your questions, available to address your comments, and willing to accept your feedback
- Position yourself to be tomorrow's leader by enhancing your business and professional skills

LeaderPoint Executive Experience

Courses: http://www.leaderpoint.biz/ieee.htm
Educational Partnerships: www.ieee.org/partners
Location: Kansas City, Missouri USA

LeaderPoint, a company specializing in executive and management development sessions and newest member to the IEEE Education Partners Program, is offering members a 10% discount on its Executive Experience session. The session, a five-day, comprehensive development program designed to advance leadership and management skills, is held in Kansas City, Mo. The Executive Experience will help participants gain the following skills:

- Build cooperation in seizing opportunity and gaining greater commitment
- Practice using systematic tools for strategic planning
- Diagnose and correct dysfunctional group dynamics
- Focus personal development in specific areas
- Develop a management mindset for improving business results

Each session has an assessment component which provides a summary of LeaderPoint's observations, the participant's comments, and specific recommendations.

Participants can contact LeaderPoint at any time for follow-up work, questions, and concerns. For more information on LeaderPoint visit http://www.leaderpoint.biz/ieee.htm. For general information on the IEEE Education Partners Program visit www.ieee.org/partners.

Mentors Needed

Website:	http://www.leaderpoint.biz/ieee.htm
Contact:	www.ieee.org/partners

The IEEE Mentoring Connection is looking for "online" mentors to help guide younger IEEE professionals in career planning and professional development. Currently, 989 mentees, but only 440 mentors have registered to participate.

Mentor participation is open to all IEEE members above the grade of Student Member. Soon, we will be inviting Graduate Student Members to join the program. These members have graduated with their first professional degree and are presently in a graduate program (Masters, MBA, PhD, etc.). We will need additional mentors in the program to handle the requests from this new group. We need you!

Presently our mentors represent the following positions:

- Associate Dean and Professor
- Director of Engineering
- Senior Sales Engineer
- Project Manager
- Corporate Owner
- Consultant
- R&D Technical Manager
- Licensing Manager
- Division Manager - Control Systems
- Electrical Engineer
- Vice President Research
- Director - Customer Operations
- Computer Scientist - Branch Chief
- Senior Product Development Engineer
- Design Engineer - Power
- Retired

If you have received an invitation to join the program and been thinking about it, now is the time to join. If you have already signed in as a mentor - thank you for participating.

Gary Hinkle, a mentor in the program, says "Helping young engineers develop in their careers is very rewarding. Working with some of these individuals has proven to be quite a challenge, because of the diversity among those seeking mentors. I'm glad to be contributing to this program."

The program enables the mentee to select their mentoring partner online from a list of individuals who have volunteered to serve as mentors. After mentors are identified as a potential match, they are contacted and asked to begin establishing a relationship.

Interested members can visit http://www.ieee.org/mentoring for information on the roles and responsibilities of each mentoring partner, including additional program information and an FAQ page. Potential mentors are asked to review the time and effort commitment to the program necessary to ensure a successful mentoring partnership. To enter the program website, please go to http://www.mentoringconnection.com and use the IEEE Group ID "IEEE2006" to enter for the first time. Once in, you will need to set your own User ID and Password.

If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Downer, Regional Activities, at c.downer AT ieee DOT org.

Educational Opportunities from IEEE

Online Courses:	Expert Now http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/modules.modulebrowse.jsp
Educational Partnerships:	http://www.ieee.org/web/education/partners/eduPartners.html
CEUs	http://www.ieee.org/web/education/ceus/index.html

Staying technically current in today's ever-changing workplace is a career must if you

want to maintain your professional edge or your P.E. license as required by more than 30 states in the US. IEEE offers an innovative new product called *Expert Now* as well as a growing service, Education Partners Program to help meet your continuing professional development needs.

Expert Now is a collection of over 65, one-hour long, interactive online courses on a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, the following:

- aerospace
- circuits & devices
- communications
- computing
- laser & optics
- microwave theory & techniques
- power
- reliability
- signal processing
- software.

Presented by experts in the field, each course brings to your desktop the best tutorial content IEEE has to offer through its technical meetings that take place worldwide. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) can be earned upon successful completion of the assessment. To review the course catalog visit http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/modules.modulebrowse.jsp.

For those looking for a more robust educational experience, more along the lines of a longer online course, or a more traditional classroom setting, the IEEE Education Partners Program can prove helpful in your search for continuing professional development opportunities. Exclusive for IEEE members, it provides access to more than 6,000 online courses, certification programs, and graduate degree programs at up to a 10% discount from academic and private providers that IEEE has peer reviewed to accept into the program. To review the current list of partners participating in the program visit http://www.ieee.org/web/education/partners/eduPartners.html.

Another way to browse for a course or educational events taking place in your area is through the courses registered with IEEE to offer CEUs. To review what's available in your area visit http://www.ieee.org/web/education/ceus/index.html. IEEE is an Authorized provider of CEUs through the International Association for Continuing Education and Training, as well as an authorized provider of CEUs for the Florida State Board. IEEE CEUs are also accepted by the New York State Board, and can easily be converted into PDHs. One CEU is equal to 10 contact hours of instruction in a continuing education activity. IEEE CEUs readily translate into Professional Development Hours (PDHs) (1 CEU = 10 PDHs).

For more general information on IEEE's Continuing Education products and services, visit http://www.ieee.org/web/education/home/index.html. Specific inquiries can be directed to Celeste Torres via email, c.torres AT ieee.org, or by phone +1 732 981 3425.

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Society: Non-Society Events

The following events are listed in chronological order with the earliest events first. This list is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to provide readers with information they may find helpful. It is updated each month.

CMS-DITA

RFID 2009

Women in Project Management Conference

UCLA WINMEC

IMETI 2009

LISA Berkley Globalization Conference

LavaCon

METM 2009

CMS-DITA Conference

Conference:	11th Annual Content Management Strategies/DITA North America Conference
Dates:	27-29 April 2009
Location:	St. Petersburg, FL USA
Proposal Due:	1 December 2008
Website:	http://www.cm-strategies.com/callforspeakers.htm

The CIDM and Dr. JoAnn Hackos ask you to consider bringing your best practices to the upcoming Content Management Strategies/DITA North America conference.

We invite you to share your experience building a content management solution in your organization, collaborating with content producers throughout your organization (training, support, engineering, documentation), delivering content in new media, using wikis and blogs to communicate with internal and external customers, and managing change. Management and technical topics are both welcome in the program.

For the DITA NA conference, we welcome discussions of selecting a DITA solution, implementing DITA in your organizations, as well as technical topics about DITA processing, specialization, and so on.

RFID 2009

Conference:	RFID 2009
Dates:	27-28 April 2009
Location:	Orlando, FL USA
Proposal Due:	1 December 2008
Website:	http://www.ieee-rfid.org/2009/index.html

The 2009 International IEEE Conference on RFID addresses key topics and issues related to RF-based identification and communication systems, and will feature keynotes, presentations on technology advances and panel discussions on pressing topics. IEEE RFID 2009 is the third annual conference that brings together researchers and

practitioners from both academia and industry to share research results and knowledge in the areas of RFID technologies, their supporting large-scale distributed information systems and their applications.

Once again co-located with the RFID Journal LIVE! 2009 tradeshow and conference, attendees and presenters alike benefit. â€¨Authors are invited to submit full 8-page papers in the IEEE conference format presenting new research related to the theory and practice of RF-based identification and communication systems. All submissions must describe original work not previously published or currently under review for publication in another conference or journal.â€¨â€¨Topic areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- **Antennas & Propagation:** Antenna theory and designs, channel measurements and modeling
- **Circuits, Devices & Sensors:** Low-power circuit designs, integrated sensors, energy harvesting, non-silicon-based structures
- **Communication Protocols:** Coding, modulation and medium access schemes
- **Security & Privacy:** Cryptographic protocols and privacy-enhancing techniques
- **System Tools:** Tools for the design, deployment and evaluation of RFID systems
- **RF-based Localization:** Novel system approaches, technologies and algorithms
- **RFID System Architecture:** "RFID middleware", large-scale discovery services
- **Policy & Regulatory Issues:** Spectral management, privacy issues, co-existence of RFID systems, social implications of RFID technology
- **Deployment Issues & Concerns:** EMC compatibility, tag recycling, issues in patient safety
- **Applications:** Reports on the introduction and operational experience of RFID applications

Women in Project Management Conference

Conference:	2nd Annual Women in Project Management Conference
Dates/Locations:	29-30 April 2009: Los Angeles, California, USA 10-11 June 2009: Columbus, Ohio, USA 15-16 September 2009: Washington, DC, USA 7-8 October 2009: Atlanta, Georgia, USA 11-12 November 2009: Dallas, Texas, USA
Website:	https://www.projectmanagementresourcegroup.com/2nd_Annual_Women_in_PM.php

Where women gather to seek the best of themselves and every woman experiences herself as the leader she was meant to be!

Day 1 & 2 Time: 8:30am-5:00pm (8-8:30 registration/breakfast)
(Breakfast, lunch, snack, and all materials included)

Be sure to attend the FREE Networking Social Event for all attendees from 5:30pm â€"
8:00 pm following Day One (Hors D'oeuvres will be served â€" Cash Bar)

UCLA WINMEC Forum

Conference:	Mobile Experience 2.0 - Seamless Convergence of Media Content, Applications, Devices, and, Networks
Dates:	13 May 2009
Location:	Los Angeles, CA USA
Website:	http://www.winmec.ucla.edu/2009/

After years of dialog on mobile convergence, what has actually converged on the mobile platform is the high quality experience, spurred by innovations in Media Content (Video, Music, Movies, T.V.), Applications (software, Operating Systems), Device Technologies (micro-processors, touch screens, system on chip radios, motion sensors) and Networks (GPRS, CDMA, LTE, WiMAX, WiFi).

Media content has grown with consumers watching TV and movies, playing games, listening to music, getting their news, or, getting directions, all from their cell phones. Innovations in digital rights management, media file exchange capability, business partnership models by Hollywood-based entertainment firms, media-store-and-forward technology, P2P, etc., has resulted in such consumers now expecting all the above forms of media content on their mobile device. The creators and owners of content have now a

better grasp on revenue models with the device and network providers. This sophisticated advancement in the business of media content in combination with the technology have started to create convergence and success in mobile entertainment media content generation, distribution and consumption.

IMETI 2009

Conference:	2nd International Multi-Conference on Engineering and Technological Innovation
Dates:	10-13 July 2009
Location:	Orlando, FL USA
Proposal Due:	24 October 2008
Notification:	17 February 2009
Final Paper:	4 February 2009
Website:	http://www.2009iiisconferences.org/IMETI

Engineering activities are based on the development of new Knowledge (scientia), new 'made things' (technÃ©) and/or new ways of working and doing (praxis). Scientia, TechnÃ© and praxis are three important dimensions of a comprehensive conception of Engineering as a whole. Engineering, as Scientia, is mostly developed in academia; as technÃ© is practiced in industry generating technological innovations; and as praxis is carried out in technical and non-technical organizations, supporting managerial activities and technical procedures, via methodical and methodological design and implementation. This is why Engineering provides one of the most solid academic and professional substrata for bridging among Universities, industries and governments.

Publications and conferences related to Engineering are usually oriented to one of its three dimensions. While this is an adequate thing to do when disciplinary focus is sought, it does not represent Engineering as a whole and it misses the very important synergic relationships among the three kinds of engineering activities mentioned above. This is why a group of scholars, professionals and consultants, in the field of engineering, considered the possibility of initiating a publishing process and organizing a conference where presentations will not be reduced to one of the Engineering's dimensions, but to foster the participation of academics, practitioners and managers in the three dimensions of Engineering, in the same conference, or in the same publication, so they can synergistically interact with each other. A consequence of this purpose is the organization of IMETI 2009, and the publication of multiple-author books series, where submissions will be accepted for the presentation of:

- New knowledge (Engineering as Scientia)
- New products and services, i.e. technological innovations (Engineering as technÃ©)
- New technical and managerial methods and methodologies (Engineering as praxis)
- New meta-engineering (Engineering of Engineering activities) knowledge, innovations and methodologies

More details regarding the notion of Engineering and reasoning supporting the definition given above can be found in the article "The Essence of Engineering and Meta-Engineering: A Work in Progress" (Callaos, 2008), which is available at www.iiis.org/Nagib-Callaos/Engineering-and-Meta-Engineering.

There will also be corresponding e-conferences during the 15 days before and after the conference, where each session to be included in the conference program will have a corresponding electronic pre-conference and post-conference virtual session for 15 days. In the electronic pre-conference sessions, authors will have access to the papers to be presented at their session and to an associated electronic forum, so they can be better prepared for their face-to-face conference session. Similarly, electronic post-conference sessions will complement and support a follow-up of the respective conference sessions, via an electronic forum and the possibility of evaluating papers presented at the associated session. These evaluations will also support the selection process for the papers to be published in the JSCI journal.

LISA Berkley Globalization Conference

Conference:	Berkeley Globalization Conference (LISA @ Berkeley)

Dates:	3-5 August 2009
Location:	Berkley, California, USA
Proposal Due:	16 March 2009
Notification:	early April 2009
Contact:	Patricia Egan, at patricia.egan AT lisa DOT org
Website:	www.lisa.org

This two-day conference (with an additional day of workshops) will focus on globalization —the business decisions and processes required to do business internationally. This conference aims to bring together researchers examining the phenomenon of globalization and so will consider three primary themes:

The social impact of globalization. How does globalization affect the attitudes and expectations of local communities with regard to goods and services? Does globalization result in leveling of regional difference or does it increase awareness of and response to those differences? Does globalization necessarily involve a center-periphery model, or do recent changes allow for the periphery to challenge the dominance of the center? How can ethnographic study influence globalization in a positive way?

Language and globalization. Language and culture are both a limiting factor in globalization and the enabler for globalization. How do organizations deal with issues of translation and cultural adaptation (localization) when entering new markets? How can demand for language best be met in a cost-effective manner that allows organizations to speak to individuals in their own languages?

Technology. Modern globalization efforts are characterized by a reliance on technical solutions to reduce costs and expand scope. How do technology and technological change impact globalization? What technologies are the most effective in meeting demand? What disruptive technologies are on the horizon?

These themes are to be interpreted broadly and submissions, including multidisciplinary ones, that engage with globalization in a constructive manner are encouraged.

LavaCon 2009

Conference:	LavaCon
Dates:	25-27 October 2009
Location:	New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
Website:	www.lavacon.org

LavaCon is a conference for technical communication managers and project managers. The Call for Speakers is available soon!

METM 2009

Conference:	Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET)
Dates:	30-31 October 2009
Location:	European Institute of the Mediterranean, Barcelona, Spain
Proposals Due:	23 March 2009 for presentations 26 April 2009 for posters
Website:	http://www.metmeetings.org/index.php?page=metm09_call

Through panel discussions, presentations, plenary sessions and workshops, METM09 will promote knowledge-building and networking among editors, translators and other English language supporters in the Mediterranean area. The plenary lectures this year will deal with the translatorâ€™s role as a writer and the history of knowledge transfer in the Mediterranean.

Have a look at the preliminary program on our website for accepted presentations and panel discussions on the dynamics of pricing editing jobs, the translation of historical texts, and defining roles in writing support services. Updates will be posted throughout the spring. Presentation categories will encompass research, promising practices and knowledge updates.

We are considering proposals that will add practical and theoretical range to the preliminary program regarding any aspect of our associationâ€™s objectives. Please send

your abstract by **30 March 2009** (details on abstract submission can be found on the website).

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Newsletter

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Guidelines

Newsletter Article Submission Guidelines

BY KIT BROWN

Submit articles by the **15th day of the month before publication**. The newsletter is published monthly around the 1st of the month. The editorial schedule provides the proposed themes for each month. Additional suggestions are always welcome.

For book and website reviews, see also the book and website review guidelines.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Kit Brown-Hoekstra.

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Please do NOT submit articles as LaTEX files. They do not convert to HTML very well, and it's a major headache to ensure that text renders correctly. Also, turn off curly quotes if using Word. Acceptable file formats are .TXT, .DOC, and .RTF. Graphics can be .JPG, .GIF, or .PNG format.

Writing Tips: If you aren't sure how to construct the article, try using the 5-paragraph essay method. (Note: The 5-paragraph concept can be expanded to longer formats, so don't be overly literal about the five paragraphs.)

1. Identify your theme and 3 main points in the introductory paragraph. This lead paragraph should draw readers in and make them want to read on.
2. Use each of the 3 body paragraphs to discuss the one of the 3 main points you identified in the first paragraph. (discuss them in the order that you listed them in the introduction). Show, don't tell. Give examples. If you express an opinion, back it up with evidence.
3. Summarize your thoughts in the conclusion paragraph and provide the reader with any actions that you want him/her to take. (The conclusion should not introduce new information, but should encapsulate what was said in the article and provide recommendations if appropriate.)

Guidelines: Please review the following information when submitting articles or regular columns to the newsletter:

- **Submit articles electronically in MSWord or RTF format to pcsnews.editor AT ieee.org.** These formats are more easily available to me than other word processing applications.
- **Provide articles that are 200-1000 words in length.** People tend to scan rather than read in an online environment. Short, well-written and relevant articles will be more beneficial to the audience than longer ones.
- **Provide a short bio (~25 words) and contact information.** Readers want to know about you. At a minimum, write a bio that tells your name, company, primary job title, email address and why this topic is of interest to you or what experience you have in the area you wrote about. (This doesn't count as part of your word count.)
- **Indicate whether the article is time sensitive.** Because of size considerations and editorial schedule, newsletter articles may not be published immediately upon submission, unless it is date critical (e.g., information about the upcoming conference or an article about a current event that relates to technical communication.)
- **Indicate copyright information if applicable.** If you own the copyright for an

article, indicate this with your submission so that we can provide appropriate attribution. If you don't own the copyright, but think an article is interesting, provide the article, along with the contact information for the copyright holder and the name of the publication where it was originally published.

- **Insert the URL into the text so that I can easily create the link.** For example, if you want to reference the w3c, you would say "refer to the W3C (http://www.w3c.org) guidelines". Don't create the hyperlink in Word.
- **Provide complete bibliographic information for references.** Include author(s), title, date of publication, publisher, page numbers or URL, ISBN number.
- **Use the (author, date) format for in-text references.** Do NOT use footnotes.
- **Use a friendly, casual tone.** We want to invite people to read and to make the information as accessible as possible.
- **Use 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins; don't indent paragraphs.** I have to reformat the text so it's better to minimize the formatting you include. Instead of indenting, put an extra line between paragraphs
- **Avoid using lots of formatting within the text.** I will have to format the articles for the online environment, so don't put lots of bold and italic in the text.
- **Use subheadings generously.** Subheadings help the reader identify the information that is important to them. Subheads are especially helpful in orienting the reader in the online environment.
- **Use active voice and short sentences.** At least 40% of our audience is outside of N. America. For many members, English is their second (or third) language. Short sentences and active voice are easier to absorb and understand than complex sentence structures.
- **Avoid jargon and "big" words when a simpler term will work.** Approximately 90% of our audience is engineers who need to write effectively on the job. Avoid using writer's jargon, or explain the term in the context. By "big" words, I mean complicated, less commonly used words that may have the same or similar meaning to other, more commonly used words (e.g., instead of "obfuscate", just say "confuse").
- **Avoid idioms.** Idiomatic phrases are those colorful sayings we use to mean something else. For example, "once in a blue moon", "jump right in", "on the fly". Unfortunately, these sayings often have no equivalent in other languages, and can be difficult for non-native English speakers to interpret.
- **Submit graphics as JPGs or GIFs.** Web graphics need to be in one of these formats for most browsers. SVGs and PNGs are not yet universally accepted. If you want graphics included in your article, you need to give me the JPG. Don't just embed it in Word.

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Guidelines

Editorial Schedule for 2008-09

BY KIT BROWN-HOEKSTRA

The following table shows the proposed themes for each issue through the year. If something particularly timely occurs during the year, these themes may change.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Kit Brown-Hoekstra.

Editorial Schedule for 2008-09

Month	Theme
December2008/ January 2009	Presentations
February	Disaster Planning and Response
March	Communication and Social Networking
April	Technical Reports
May	Proposals
June	Grant Writing
July/August	Globalization/Localization
September	Visual Design
October	Making a Difference
November	Strategic Planning for Techies
December	Best Practices/Standards

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Guidelines

Book and Website Review Guidelines

BY KIT BROWN-HOEKSTRA

Have you read a good book lately? Found a website you can't wait to tell people about? Here's your chance to share your newfound knowledge with your colleagues.

Here are some hints for constructing the review:

1. Include the complete bibliographic information for the book or website immediately after your byline. For example: *Now, Discover Your Strengths by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton. 2001. The Free Press: New York. pp.260. ISBN: 0-7432-0114-0. URL:* http://www.strengthsfinder.com
2. In 2-3 sentences, tell the reader what the book or website is about and how it relates to technical communication.
3. Provide 2-3 things you got out of the book or website, and if applicable, 2-3 things that you wish they had done differently. Opinions are OK if they are supported
4. Support your opinions using specific examples from the book or website. This analysis should be brief--1-2 paragraphs at most.
5. Conclude with a recommendation of how this information might be useful to the user.

The reviews should meet the following guidelines:

- **Keep it short.** The reviews should be 300-500 words. A couple of paragraphs can tell the reader a great deal about what the book/website is about and why one should read it.
- **Focus on the big picture.** In a short review, there isn't room to go page by page and analyze every detail. Instead, pick out the main themes and write about the overall impression. This style is much more interesting to read.
- **Use an informal, conversational tone.** Pretend you are talking to someone about the book or website, and that you only have one minute to explain it to them. What would you tell them about it?
- **Review the article guidelines.** These guidelines provide more detail about the grammar and style for presenting the information, as well as the format the editor needs to receive the information in.

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