IEEE Newsletter PCS

IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 50, Number 12 • December 2006

A Dozen Great Myths about New Technology

by john V. Hedtke

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A "Homebrew" Usability Testing Tool

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Technical Communication: What is it Anyway?

Behind any written document there exists a synthesis of three components: the author, the subject, and the audience. All three elements work together to create meaning and each has responsibilities in this relationship (Stratton). Different genres of writing emphasize different relationships among the three components of a document...**Read more**.

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Providing Feedback to Writers and Designer

Question: As a reviewer, I find that some writers and designers are defensive or easily offended. How can I provide tactful feedback to them?....**Read more.**

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Many things have changed since our formation back in 1957. Back then, who could have envisioned what it is like to work in our profession today? Words like offshoring, internationalization, and online (however you hyphen.... **Read More**.

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Feature

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Even if we don't write about new technology for our jobs, we still have to use it to get our jobs done. New technology is frequently surrounded by hype, misperceptions, and outright lies that make it harder for us to use it effortlessly. This article will discuss some of the most popular myths of new technology.

There's a cluster of general concepts to look at first:

1. New technology is easier to use than old technology.

This one's pure marketing hype. While it may actually be true occasionally, it's important to factor in the cost of learning the new technology and becoming proficient in it. Perhaps the best example of this is that we all have, at one time or another, chosen to delay switching from one product or technology to another simply because it was going to take time to install/learn/get the new finger rhythms in place. In addition, some old technology is worth keeping indefinitely: I still type 30 wpm faster on keyboards that have the CTRL key next to the "A" and the function keys on the right than on the newer keyboards that have the CapsLock key there. You can still buy keyboards that work the way they used to, but they're a little more expensive. But for me, who learned to use computers when men were men and women were women and cars were cars and 640K was enough for anybody, it's worth the money to stay with the older technology.

2. New technology is more difficult to use than old technology.

Hey, there's no reason that technomyths can't be mutually exclusive! One of the things that people often expect (as a result of being burned too often) is that new technology is always going to be more difficult to use than the thing it's replacing. But this one isn't any truer than the previous technomyth. The driving reason for creating and selling new technology is usually a perceived need for something that works better than any existing technology. While the manufacturers may fail in their delivery, they're going to try to do something that works well and actually has a reason for selling.

3. New technology is better/faster/cheaper than old technology.

This technomyth smacks of "ending is better than mending." Just because something is new does not mean it's better, although we do live in hope. The costs of installing and supporting a new technology can be far greater than the cost of the new technology itself. Moreover, many new technologies simply miss the mark for some reason: they aren't well-designed, they don't solve the real problem, or they simply don't work as advertised. Some ideas speak for themselves in this regard: consider car alarms.

The key to these three technomyths is the idea that we can do things better and faster without changing anything. All

improvements will result in some measure of change, no matter what we do. It may actually be worth our time to make the change to a new technology and it may be an improvement when we do, but each change should be evaluated in its own right.

With these basic myths out of the way, there are some more specific misconceptions you should look at:

4. New tools will help you get the project out more quickly.

Most new technology will usually only give you a very slight increase in productivity. (There are wonderful counter-examples to this, however, such as online help tools like RoboHelp or web development tools versus doing things by hand.) Something else to think about: Fred Brooks, in *The Mythical Man-Month*, identified Brooks' Law, which states "Adding more people to a late project will only make it later." Sadly, this can be true of technology as well. Time-savings are a desirable effect of new technology, but they're not to be expected. A technology that bills itself as being a major time-saver may deliver far less than it promises.

5. New technology will work seamlessly with the older technology.

Hahahahahohohohoheeheeheehee! No matter what the new technology, it won't always work as predicted. One of the best examples of this is "Plug-n'-Play" technology for Windows. Supposedly when you install a new video card, hard disk, or whatever, the operating system will automatically recognize the card and will load the right driver and life is seamless. This is a lovely idea and it actually works perhaps half the time, but owing to the vagaries of both software and hardware, you frequently have to hack on the system to make it all work right. This has a corollary technomyth of "It's a system problem." They're all human problems, but sometimes it's just hard to track down the human responsible for the problem.

6. New technology will reduce/eliminate the paperwork you have to do.

It's possible that the Palm Pilot has served to reduce paperwork, but that's probably the first time that a new technology has actually done so. Every other technology has actually increased the amount of paper you need to deal with. Want proof? We have collectively spent about a trillion dollars on computers and technology in the US in the last 25 years, but paper use has steadily increased despite the continual incorporation of new technology. (And, yes, there was a paperless toilet invented by the Japanese in the late 80s, so the old canard about paperless offices did come true.)

7. Buying the latest thing is a good idea.

Generally speaking, it is not a good idea to rush out and buy the latest, greatest version of technology. Only a fool would install a brand-new version of, say, Windows or Word or even FrameMaker on a mission-critical computer, if for no other reason than it hasn't been tested by the public (read "the slow gazelles in the herd"). It's a good idea to wait as long as possible before installing the newest software version—a year is usually about right in my experience—by which time there will have been a couple of service packs released that will probably fix the most heinous bugs in the software that would otherwise cripple you.

This sense of caution doesn't apply just to software. Buying the latest and greatest hardware is going to cost you as much as twice what the next older version costs for only an incremental increase in performance per dollar. There are dozens of examples of this, including the latest Pentium processor, CD-writers, DVD players, large screen monitors, wide-screen TVs, microwave ovens, and VCRs. If you can afford to wait a while or you don't need the hottest version, you'll save

money and get something that's a little more mature. If there's a standardization issue—a la Beta vs. VHS—you may have a chance for it to resolve before you invest in what might be the wrong thing. You'll also avoid a lot of compatibility problems that new technology is prone to (for example, not all DVDs play on all DVD players).

What distinguishes these technomyths is that they're primarily extensions of marketing hype. They may actually be true, but there's a good chance that they're mere canards. New technology isn't going to be seamless, but it may well be worth it if you keep an eye on what's real.

This article wouldn't be complete without a few of the great corporate technomyths, too:

8. With the new support system in place, our support volumes will decrease 50%.

Just as your productivity won't go up by leaps and bounds when you add a new technology to the mix, the call load in support isn't going to drop by massive amounts, either, no matter what technology you implement. You can effect small or gradual decreases in the support call volume by improving the product, the documentation, or the marketing, but it's not going to happen overnight. (You can also increase the call load by messing up any or all of these things, but there's probably no value to you in doing so.)

9. All writers/artists use Macs.

There used to be a significant difference between Macs and Windows in their capabilities. Some of this was definitely real—Macs really did do graphics better and they were certainly lower maintenance and friendlier to the average user than DOS or Windows—and some of this was marketing hype. While a case could be made that Macs are still friendlier and more stable than Windows, Windows computers are what 94% of the market uses. (For the record, I have always thought that Macs are better computers in general but I can't stand 'em personally.) Nevertheless, the technomyth continues to circulate that creative types will use Macs by preference. The bottom line for this technomyth is that you should use whatever computer suits you best.

10. Everything is intuitively obvious.

Also stated as "Oh, our users don't need that—they'll know exactly what to do" or "It's so easy anyone can do it." This is one of the best corporate technomyths of all. When we were in college and learning about the ancient Greeks, we learned about hubris as the driving force behind Greek tragedies but most of us thought we'd never actually see it for ourselves… but then we got jobs in high-technology. New technology is almost never "intuitively obvious." The fact that new technology will involve learning new concepts and possibly a new way of thinking about something that is in opposition to "intuitively obvious." More likely, this just means that the developer or engineer has a clear idea of how he (it always seems to be a guy who says this) thinks the product will be used and he doesn't want to hear anything that counters that.

11. Microsoft did it that way, so we should/should not do it that way, too.

Unless your company is also a multi-billion dollar company with more marketing muscle than anyone else, it's probably a bad idea to use Microsoft as a primary justification for pursuing (or not pursuing) a course of action. Microsoft can command economies of scale and marketing budgets that the rest of us only dream about, but that also makes them far-sighted: it's simply not worth their time to pursue a product that won't generate at least $20 million in revenue. The rest of us are usually quite willing to work very hard for even a couple million bucks worth of revenue and should plan our actions

accordingly. Microsoft is Microsoft; you are you.

These technomyths demonstrate that companies are prone to falling for classic lies, too. While you may not have any great luck in convincing the powers that be that they're making a mistake in their reasoning, you can be prepared for the outcomes and avoid the fall-out.

All of this brings us to the greatest technomyth of all:

12. Computers are easy to use.

My all-time favorite technomyth, this one probably causes more frustration than any other. Regardless of our skill levels, we are all frustrated by our computers, frequently quite audibly. This is because, even if we've never used a computer ourselves before, we already *know* what computers are like: they're just like they are on Star Trek. You can talk to them, they understand whatever garbled, inexact, ambiguous questions you ask, they keep track of where everyone is and where to find their socks, and they never, ever crash. Unfortunately, we come to using computers with this picture in our heads and the reality is a good deal less pleasant; our computers don't respond well when we talk to them (even if we've got voice-recognition software), they're clunky, and you constantly have to mess with installing new software and doing nitty little maintenance tasks. For the record, I'd love to have a computer that was smart enough to understand what I said and could also tell me where I last left my car keys, but they're not available yet.

Summary

Despite all the comments to the contrary, technomyths are occasionally true. New technology sometimes will work as advertised and be cheaper, faster, and better. Our laundry and teeth will be cleaner and brighter and we'll save money and resources doing it, too. We'll fall for technomyths occasionally no matter what we do, but if we keep our eyes open, we won't do it often. Furthermore, by looking for the technomyths, we'll be able to adopt the new technologies that really will help us and avoid the dead-ends and tidepools that will only waste our time.

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IEEE Newsletter PCS

IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 50, Number 12 • December 2006

Feature

Technical Communication: What is it Anyway?

By Robert Schafer

Behind any written document there exists a synthesis of three components: the author, the subject, and the audience. All three elements work together to create meaning and each has responsibilities in this relationship (Stratton).

Different genres of writing emphasize different relationships among the three components of a document. A novel emphasizes the relationship between the author and the audience, while an informative essay (such as this one) concentrates on the exploration of a subject by an author. Technical writing emphasizes the relationship between the subject and the audience; the author or authors are secondary in this dynamic. In many ways, a technical document can be confusing to the reader if the author is too prominent in the text.

To illustrate how this relationship between the reader and the subject works in a technical document consider the user's manual for your car. You may glance at it when you first buy your vehicle, but most often you refer to the manual only when you want information—and usually in response to some question or problem. As the reader (or user), you require information. Perhaps your brake lights are burned out and you need to replace the bulbs so you consult the user's manual. Even the title of this document privileges the relationship between the subject and the audience in that no byline is found on your user's manual for your vehicle! You don't care who wrote it: you just need information—now!

Defining Technical Writing

This genre of writing has many nuances that are reflected in the multiplicity of terms used to label it, including technical communication, professional writing, technical rhetoric, and professional communication. There are two major dichotomies at work when anyone tries to define this discipline: professional/technical and communication/writing.

Initially, technical writing evolved out of a need to transmit specific technical information to users who did not understand the jargon of engineers. Every academic discipline and industry arena possess certain terminology or uses of words that are either unique to that community or used in a unique manner that the general public does not explicitly understand. Soon after World War II, Americans were able to buy the first televisions, transistor radios, kitchen appliances, and other products of technology that were new to the general populace. Engineers were more concerned with creating new products, than with communicating to non-engineers how to use them. Someone needed to "translate," and thus technical writing became a recognized profession.

Soon, other professions and industries began to notice that they could also benefit from this kind of specialized skill. Writers were hired to transmit information from not only scientific and electronic industries but also those of medicine, pharmaceuticals, computers, software, and education began to use specialized writers to convey instructions, write internal reports, and craft grant proposals. Technical writing soon transcended technology and pervaded other professions; in essence technical writing is now just one genre within a multiplicity of professional writing contexts.

Defining Technical Communication

In addition to multiple professions using specialized writing to convey specific information through print, another need was soon realized: a need to reach specific audiences through other means than the written page. More and more specific information is being disseminated orally and visually to audiences of different cultures and in different settings. Managers have to present findings to higher levels of management, new medicines have to be explained to global communities, and instructions for products and services have to be understood by customers with different expectations and learning contexts. Professional writers are moving beyond solely written media (whether printed or computer screen) to the arena of holistic communication.

In order to illustrate this point, consider our earlier example: your car's user manual. If you were to consult the manual for directions to change a burnt-out bulb in your taillight, chances are that you will encounter other symbols than just written text. Most manuals have illustrations designed to convey information to a specific audience—you. You see pictures with step-by-step instructions, including visual representations of parts and arrows that portray movement. In addition, you may encounter colors such as red or yellow, which may have other meanings in other cultures. Writing specialists now have to understand how icons or figures can transmit specific directions outside of written text.

We are now in the position to define technical (or professional) communication: to provide specific information to a specific audience for a specific purpose or use. Undoubtedly you noticed throughout this article my repeated use of the term "specific." This qualifier is vital to our understanding of this discipline and merits a closer examination.

Specificity

Remember, technical (and professional) writing emphasizes the dynamic between the subject of the document and the reader of that document. More than any other pairing (author/subject or author/audience), this presupposes a sense of urgency. A novel or an essay can wait; a burnt-out taillight cannot. This urgency is seldom experienced in a general way and results from a specific problem to be solved on the part of the reader. You are the one with the burnt-out taillight and you need to know how to change it. You are a specific person with a specific problem that needs a specific solution.

To solve this specific problem, you need specific information that is clear, concise, and presented in such a way that you can access and use it. If the information is crafted with technical jargon or obscure language, it is at best time consuming to translate and at worst useless to you in your situation. You are the specific user; you bought the car and they gave you that manual. Technical communicators specialize in analyzing what specific kinds of people would buy that car and in what specific contexts you would need to use the manual. Taillights burn out and clear information should be constructed in anticipation of that specific need.

Another, often unspoken, aspect of a technical document is that of a specific shelf life. Novels and essays are often written for broader audiences and with a sense of timelessness. Most genres that emphasize the author in the dynamic aim for longevity. Technical documents are tied to a specific audience with a specific purpose. When the audience is informed and

the purpose fulfilled, technical documents lose urgency; they lose relevance. Cars rust and are junked, computer software quickly becomes dated, and instructions are learned and no longer needed. Technical documents form from urgency, and that urgency creates contexts of specificity by which all technical documents are judged useful, confusing, or irrelevant.

Conclusion

I have defined technical communication as providing specific information to a specific audience for a specific purpose or use. Technical documents are used with urgency that creates contexts of specificity that encompass usability, clarity, audience, intent, and shelf life. In a world where the boundaries of countries, language, culture, and industry (even workscapes) continue to overlap and even, perhaps, disappear, technical communicators will become more valuable and pervasive within other contexts of specificity and utility in other professions and industry.

I leave you with these questions to consider: How can technical communicators influence future conventions of technology? Paper is portable; computers are accessible through ubiquitous networks. How are future contexts of specificity going to be addressed by technical communicators in the light of future urgency?

References

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IEEE Newsletter PCS

IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 50, Number 12 • December 2006

Tools and Technology

A "Homebrew" Usability Testing Tool

by Neil Perlin

Ask most software companies if usability testing is important and you'll get a resounding "yes!" Yet, many of those same companies don't test usability because they think it's too difficult and time-consuming and requires complex and expensive tools.

There's an element of truth to this. Usability testing and recording can be difficult, time-consuming, and can require complex and expensive tools. But it's also possible to get useful test results by adapting other tools that you already own, which may not have been designed for usability test work in the first place. Specifically, I'm talking about the visual training authoring tools like Adobe Captivate®, TechSmith Camtasia®, and Qarbon Viewlet Builder®. I'll focus on Captivate because I consider it to be the most powerful tool of this type, but other such tools should be similarly configurable.

These tools are essentially non-stop screen recorders. They record activity on the screen as a series of consecutive screen shots, like frames in a filmstrip, which you can play back as a movie. You can also annotate those frames with text captions, highlights, audio, video, animations, interactivity features, and more, to create movies ranging from simple software demos to interactive software or sales simulations, or even surprisingly powerful eLearning. These tools are also cheap ($599 for Captivate), and quick and easy to learn (a two-day training course is enough to teach Captivate's basic features).

In order to use Captivate to record usability test results for later evaluation, you can set it up to perform the following actions:

- Record every screen on which a test subject takes some action, such as selecting a menu or sub-menu, making a field entry, making a mouse pick, or using a spin box or pulldown.
- Record the mouse path between these actions.
- Add a special effect to each mouse click for visual emphasis during playback.
- Add a descriptive text caption for anything that the test subject does that sends a Windows-standard call to the software being tested.
- Make all this happen automatically in the background, without distracting the test subject.
- Turn on audio recording, give test subjects a headset with a boom mike, (to make it unobtrusive), and ask them to speak their thoughts as they work through the steps of the test.

I've done this in dummy usability tests and it works almost perfectly, creating a rendition of almost everything I did on the screen. (I'll discuss the "almost" part at the end.) I can then view this "movie" for review and evaluation in a preview mode or publish a finished version for distribution to other reviewers. A playback control bar lets me stop or back up as necessary in order to study what the test subjects did.

This homebrew usability test recording tool isn't perfect, though all but one problem has a workaround. Here are the problems I encountered in my experiments:

- It's important to see a timer on the screen to gauge when a test subject performed some task and how much time elapsed between tasks. (Too much time may mean that a test subject was confused.) To get a timer on the screen, just set Captivate to record in full-screen mode in order to capture Windows' clock on the task bar.

  However, Windows' clock is useless for usability because it can't show seconds. I temporarily replaced it with a freeware plug-in called **TClockEx** (Taskbar Clock Enhancement). This plug-in, from South African programmer Dale Nurden, lets you reconfigure the clock and seems to work fine under Windows XP even though it was created in 2000. I set it up to display the day of the week, the date, and the time in hours, minutes, and seconds, thus enabling date- and time-stamping for the test results as well as showing elapsed time in seconds between tasks. (As another benefit, seeing the time on the screen would help synchronize the movie with any video taken during the test.)

- Captivate uses the End key to stop recording screen activity. You can switch this function to a different key. I normally recommend against doing so because the End key is intuitively logical. For usability testing, however, I would reassign it to a key combination to eliminate the risk of a test subject accidentally hitting the End key and aborting the recording of the test, or if the application being tested actually uses the End key.
- Although recording in full-screen mode captures the clock, you may have to scroll vertically or horizontally to see it when you run the movie. Shrink the movie, using the Resize Project feature on the Project menu, to make sure you can see the clock in the lower-right corner of the screen without scrolling. I recorded at 1280 x 800, then resized to 75% for playback. This eliminated any scrolling yet kept the clock big enough to read.
- The playback control bar lets you review a movie at your own pace, but don't set the control bar Layout to Stretched. A stretched control bar extends the full width of the window and covers up the clock. To fix this, select Report/Skin, go to the Playback Control tab, select the Layout pulldown, and select Bottom Left.
- Captivate is a memory hog and the application being tested may be buggy, so it's a good idea to reboot between tests and to run only Captivate and the application.
- The only problem with no workaround is Captivate's inability to record random mouse movement, such as that made by a confused user.

Summary

This type of homebrew solution doesn't eliminate all the barriers to usability testing. But it does offer a simple, flexible, convenient way to gather and evaluate test results. And, if you already own Captivate or a similar tool, it's free – always a strongpoint for any tool.

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Neil Perlin *is president of Hyper/Word Services (**www.hyperword.com**) of Tewksbury, MA. He has almost 28 years experience in technical writing, with almost 22 in training, consulting, and developing for online formats including WinHelp, HTML Help, CE Help, JavaHelp, RoboHelp, Flare, and some now dug up by paleontologists. Neil is a member of IEEE PCS, an associate fellow of the STC, and the founder and manager of the annual STC conference's Beyond the Bleeding Edge stem.*

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IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 50, Number 12 • December 2006

Ask the Expert

Providing Feedback to Writers and Designers

by Jean-Luc Doumont

Question

As a reviewer, I find that some writers and designers are defensive or easily offended. How can I provide tactful feedback to them?

Answer

Though it is obviously not constructive, a defensive attitude toward feedback is understandable, especially from writers or designers who want to do their best and have therefore put their heart in their creative work. The following three strategies have helped me get feedback across more gently.

First, and obviously, strive not to seem threatening or judgmental: show that your comments are meant to help. To show that you are "on their side", try phrasing suggestions with a collaborative *we* rather than an accusatory *you*. For example, instead of "Could you turn this passive voice into an active one?", you might write "Could we turn..."

Next, balance positive and negative feedback. Though effective features need not be fixed, pointing them out is sure to create good will. In this respect, a global assessment helps writers and designers place feedback in the proper perspective, and guards against discouragement in case you have numerous detailed comments.

Finally, to avoid antagonizing writers or designers who do not take orders easily, try pointing out possible issues as a question, not as a statement (or, worse, as a command). When spotting an apparent inconsistency, for example, instead of ordering "Be consistent", you might ask "Is this difference intentional?" They probably prefer to conclude for themselves regarding the inconsistency than be told by you.

All in all, stick to your role as reviewer. Merely crossing out a sentence and replacing it by another somehow disempowers the author. Unless otherwise agreed, point out aspects that writers or designers must attend to, but do not rewrite or redesign. If you have a ready solution, feel free to offer it, but do point out the issue first.

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*Jean-luc Doumont (**www.principiae.be**) provides help with and runs training sessions on effective oral presentations, written documents, graphical displays, and related topics of scientific, technical, or business communication. He also trains instructors and facilitates any process in need of structuring. In hundreds of sessions, he has addressed audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and nationalities, in English, French, Dutch, and Spanish. He is an engineer from the University of Louvain and a doctor in applied physics from Stanford University.*

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President's Column

Luke is working on an article for a future issue and is in the midst of moving this month. His column will return next month.

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Editor's Column

Tempus Fugit

by Kit brown

It seems like I just wrote a holiday-themed article for this newsletter. This year has flown by. Interesting how our perception of time changes as we get older (maybe one of those quantum physicists out there can figure out why that is). When I was a kid, summer lasted forever and it seemed like Christmas would never come. Today, it seems as though I rush from one season to another through one year after another.

When I review the list of the things I've done (and the even longer list of things I still "need" to do), no wonder I'm exhausted and ready for a long winter nap. (I will spare you the details--my **fall ramblings** were described in last month's conference recap; the rest of the year was equally busy.)

As you celebrate your holiday of choice, remember to slow down and enjoy the moment---the delighted laughter of a small child, the beauty of moonlight glistening off the snow (or sand if you are in warmer climes), the precious moments of family gatherings (yes, even when we drive each other crazy with our peccadillos), a bonfire, cheery lights whether strung from houses, trees, boats, or other structures, the kindness of strangers...these are the things that make life truly worth living. And, if you feel so inclined, pass on a little kindness--the world could use more of it.

My wish for you is that 2007 will be better than all the years that have gone before and not as good as the ones yet to come.

Peace, Joy, Kindness, and Hope to you and yours today and every day.

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Tidbits

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

APS Professional Development Guide Available

From Mary Y Wisniewski

The APS Professional Development Guide has been posted on the APS website - (recently redesigned).

The link is:

http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/index.cfm

and then click on "Professional Development Guide". Several past newsletter articles are referenced in the updated guide.

Travel Well, Do Good Works

From September 2006 issue of Oprah Magazine

This time of year, many thoughts turn to how we can make the world a better place. A company called Relief Riders International (**www.reliefridersinternational.com**) takes groups on adventure horseback treks to remote areas in India to work with mobile medical camps. According to *Oprah* magazine, these trips are a "short-term Peace Corps for the adventure travel set." The organization also takes donations.

Farraday Cages and You

From December 2006 issue of *Spectrum*

Thieves and other nefarious characters often exploit the vulnerabilities of new technologies, such as RFID. Now, some companies are embedding Farraday cages into the fabric of your wallet to foil RFID scanners. **Read more**...

Engineers and Autism

From December 2006 issue of *Spectrum*

We've all heard the jokes, but now there is apparently scientific evidence to back up the observations about engineers and their quirks. The *Spectrum* article (pg 10), hypothesizes that "assortive mating" is part of the reason why autism is on the rise in many developing countries. In other words, when two systematic thinkers (like most engineers) get together, their resulting offspring can often magnify that systematic thinking to the point where it becomes socially maladaptive, resulting in autism spectrum disorders. Interestingly, however, these disorders, which make social interaction difficult, often result in compensating abilities in other areas. Temple Grandin (an animal science professor at Colorado State made famous both because of her autism and because of her ingenious modifications of cattle chutes and pens to reduce stress on the animals) provides one example. Interesting food for thought...

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Society News: 50th Anniversary

Entering the Way Back Machine

by 50th Anniversary Committee

Many things have changed since our formation back in 1957. Back then, who could have envisioned what it is like to work in our profession today? Words like offshoring, internationalization, and online (however you hyphenate it) didn't exist. PCs, Google, and spell-check would have been called science fiction.

As part of our 50th Anniversary Celebration, we'd like to help technical communicators of today envision what it was like to work in the field back then. A natural place to begin would be to contact our members who joined back when we were called the IRE Professional Group on Engineering Writing and Speech, but unfortunately our Society records are a bit sketchy.

Do you have old journals or proceedings from 1960 or before? Or a sample of something you wrote in the late 1950s? Do you have a story you'd be willing to share with us? If so, please contact Brenda Huettner at **bphuettner@ieee.org**.

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IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 50, Number 12 • December 2006

Society News: PCS Events

IPCC 2007

by IPCC Conference Committee

IPCC 2007 is in Seattle, Washington and will be a gala event celebrating PCS' 50th anniversary. Hope you can make it! The Call for Proposals is available. (See the **Call for Articles** page.)

The 50th anniversary committee is already planning some great activities. See the **50th anniversary article** for more information.

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IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 50, Number 12 • December 2006

Society News: Member News

PCS Congratulates Our New Senior Members!

by IEEE-PCS Adcom

Martin Aidam
Dennis Brewer
Brian R. Harrington
Brenda Huettner

Senior Membership recognizes significant performance over a period of at least 5 years, and participation in the professional for at least 10 years. Applicants must submit three references from IEEE Senior Members or Fellows before the application is reviewed by a the Admission and Advancement Committee Review Panel. The most recent Review Panel meeting was held on 18 November 2006 in New Orleans, LA.

New Senior Members get a lovely plaque and a $25 credit toward any Society membership. If you'd like to learn more about this program, see **http://www.ieee.org/organizations/rab/md/smelev.htm** or contact Brenda Huettner at **bphuettner@ieee.org** for help with forms or information about references. The next IEEE Senior Member Review Panel Meeting will be held in January 2007.

Membership Renewals

By Brenda Huettner, Membership Chair

It is time once again to renew your IEEE membership! New member benefits this year include IEEE.tv, a mentoring program, and new course offereings through IEEE Xpert Now program. If you renew your IEEE membership before December 31st, you'll get a free IEEE e-book (check out their catalog at **www.ieee.org/press**).

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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.

New Master's Programs at Illinois Institute of Technology

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Illinois Institute of Technology introduces three new professional Master's degree programs:

Master of Biomedical Imaging and Signals-addresses the interdisciplinary nature of the emerging biomedical engineering field with a targeted focus in medical imaging and biosignals.

Master of Power Engineering-provides concentrated training in the areas of power systems, power electronics, motor drives, and electric machines.

Master of VLSI and Microelectronics-offers specialized training in the areas of very large scale integrated-circuit technology, CAD design, and microelectronics with electronic systems design applications.

These programs can be completed without a thesis or comprehensive exam. The GRE is waived for applicants who hold a B. S. degree in a related field from a U.S. institution, completed with a minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0. Degree requirements for

these programs can be completed online.

Learn more about electrical and computer engineering at IIT: visit **www.ece.iit.edu** or contact Catherine Kozuch/O'Brien, Graduate Program Coordinator, IIT Armour College of Engineering, **obrien@iit.edu**, phone: +1 312.567.3043.

To inquire or apply online: **www.grad.iit.edu**

Master's Course University of Twente in The Nederlands

Title:	Master's Course in User Support
Dates:	September 2006 to February 2007
Location:	University of Twente in The Nederlands

Members of IEEE-PCS, STIC, STC, and other INTECOM societies receive a €500 discount!

The University of Twente offers a unique opportunity for professionals in the user support field to get acquainted with the theory and research on user support. A distance learning course gives you an overview of recent and influential theories behind user instructions, manuals, help desks, and user groups. **Read more**...

IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking Conference (CCNC)

Title:	IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking Conference (CCNC)
Dates:	11 to 13 January 2007
Location:	Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
URL:	**http://www.ieee-ccnc.org/2007**

IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking Conference, sponsored by IEEE Communications Society, is a major annual international conference organized with the objective of bringing together researchers, developers, and practitioners from academia and industry working in all areas of consumer communications and networking. CCNC 2007 will present the latest developments and technical solutions in the areas of wireless, multimedia, and consumer networking, enabling technologies (such as middleware), and novel applications and services.

The conference will include a peer-reviewed program of technical sessions, special sessions, business application sessions, tutorials, and demonstration sessions. Authors are invited to submit complete unpublished papers, which are not under review in any other conference or journal.

Authors should submit a five-page technical paper manuscript (or a two-page demonstration summary) in double-column IEEE format including authors' names and affiliations, and a short abstract through EDAS, following the submission guidelines available on the CCNC2007 website. Only electronic submission will be accepted.

Sarnoff Symposium 2007

Title:	IEEE Sarnoff Symposium 2007
Dates:	30 April to 2 May 2007
Location:	Princeton, NJ, USA
URL:	**www.sarnoffsymposium.org**

This event showcases the newest technologies and products in Telecom and Multimedia.

The 2007 IEEE Sarnoff Symposium will continue its tradition of almost 30 years in bringing together professionals and industry experts to exchange information on the latest developments in communication systems, microwave technology and multimedia applications. The conference includes an exhibition of components, technologies, systems and services and also features tutorials and a student poster session.

The historic Nassau Inn, conveniently located in the heart of downtown Princeton, will again be the host for the event. Its rustic ambiance and sophisticated charm make it one of New Jersey's premier hotels.

Besides the technical paper presentations the Symposium will include tutorials, student paper poster presentations, executive panels, and exhibitions.

International Conference on Security of Information and Networks (SIN 2007)

Title:	International Conference on Security of Information and Networks (SIN 2007)
Dates:	8-10 May 2007
Location:	Salamis Bay Conti Resort Hotel, Gazimagusa (TRNC), North Cyprus
URL:	**http://www.sinconf.org/**

Dates to Remember:

Workshop Proposals Due:	31 December 2006
Proposal Acceptance Notification Date:	10 January 2007
Conference Paper Submission Due:	14 February 2007
Workshop Paper Submission Due:	15 February 2007
Tutorial Proposal Submission Due:	21 February 2007
Tutorial Notification Date:	9 March 2007
Author Notification:	19 March 2007
All Papers Camera Ready:	5 April 2007

Organized By:

- Faculty of Engineering, Eastern Mediterranean University, Gazimagusa (TRNC), North Cyprus
- Faculty of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey

Sponsored By:

- Scientific & Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) (pending)
- National Research Institute of Electronics and Cryptology (UEKAE)
- IEEE Turkey Section

- IEEE Computer Society Turkey Branch
- Chamber of Computer Engineers, TRNC, North Cyprus

Hosted By:

- Computer Engineering Department and Internet Technologies Research Center (ITRC), Eastern Mediterranean University, Gazimagusa (TRNC), North Cyprus

The International Conference on Security of Information and Networks (SIN 2007) provides an international forum for presentation of research and applications of security in information and networks. The SIN 2007 conference features contributed as well as invited papers and tutorials on practice and applications. Its drive is to convene a high quality, well-attended, and up-to-date conference on scientific and technical issues of security in information, networks, and systems.

Conference main theme is Information Assurance, Security, and Public Policy, that is, by another name, "Effecting Security in the Age of e-X", where X could stand for any buzzword such as commerce, tourism, banking, wallet, learning,... Other themes vying for the top spot are "Security Development Lifecycle: Promises, Practices, Findings", "High-Assurance Design", "Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and Identity Management", and "VoIP & Wireless Access: Boon or Bust for Enterprise Security".

IM 2007

Title:	10th IFIP/IEEE International Symposium on Integrated Network Management (IM 2007)
Dates:	21-25 May 2007
Location:	Munich, Germany
URL:	**www.ieee-im.org**

Proposals are due **24 August 2006**!

The Tenth IFIP/IEEE International Symposium on Integrated Management (IM 2007) will be held 21-25 May 2007 in Munich, Germany. IM 2007 will present the latest technical advances in the area of management, operations and control of networks, networking services, networked applications, and distributed systems. Held in odd-numbered years since 1989 and taking turns with its sibling conference NOMS, IM 2007 will build on the successes of its predecessors and serve as the primary forum for exchange among the research, standards, vendor and user communities in the field of integrated management. The symposium is sponsored by the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) Working Group 6.6 on Management of Networks and Distributed Systems, and by the IEEE Communications Society Technical Committee on Network Operations and Management (CNOM).

Integrated management of networked systems is facing new challenges, stemming from a combination of rapidly evolving technologies and an increased scrutiny from corporate customers. At the same time, as IT and network services become more and more ubiquitous, their reliability and performance become more critical for all kinds of enterprises. The resulting demands for improving and verifying service quality must be met in an environment of increasingly distributed and

decentralized service provisioning, accelerated service lifecycles, and unprecedented security challenges. Today's IT management issues involve many diverse problems in controlling heterogeneous IT infrastructures, often across organizational boundaries. However, new and difficult challenges are emerging while aligning technical and organizational IT management to business requirements, thus calling for integrating management tools and measures "from bits to business value".

IM 2007 will be organized into technical and application sessions, panels, tutorials and workshops. In addition, it will feature an industrial experience track to share practical lessons learned by the user and vendor communities, posters, birds-of-a-feather sessions, and vendor exhibits. In the tradition of previous events, we strive to make the IM 2007 Symposium the highest quality professional event of the year. Paper submissions will undergo a stringent review process implemented by the Technical Program Committee, which includes the most respected experts in the field. We encourage papers that break new ground or present insightful results based on experience with integrated management of networks, systems, applications and services.

ISTAS 2007

Title:	ISTAS: International Symposium on Technology and Society
Dates:	1-2 June 2007
Location:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada USA
URL:	**http://www.unlv.edu/faculty/dmh/ISTAS2007/**

Papers at the conference will cover a variety of relevant subtopics, from gaming technology to natural and anthropogenic catastrophes, as well as other traditional ISTAS topics. The conference will be sponsored by IEEE-SSIT, with the Risk Assessment and Policy Association, the UNLV Department of Environmental Studies and the UNLV Institute for Security Studies as co-sponsors.

For more information, contact Conference Chair David M. Hassenzahl at **david.hassenzahl@unlv.edu**.

IEEE International Conference on Communications

Title:	IEEE ICC
Dates:	24-28 June 2007
Location:	Glasgow, Scotland UK
URL:	**http://www.ieee-icc.org/2007/**

The Conference addresses key themes on "Smart Communications Technologies for Tomorrow". The program will feature a General Conference, 10 Specific Symposia, Applications Sessions, and Tutorials. Prospective authors are invited to submit original technical papers for oral or poster presentations at ICC 2007 and publication in the Conference Proceedings. (IEEE Communications Society policy states that all accepted ICC 2007 technical presenters must register at the full or limited rate. For authors presenting multiple papers, one full or limited registration is valid up to three papers).

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Calls for Articles/Proposals/Volunteers

IPCC 2007 Call for Papers

The theme for IPCC 2007 is Engineering the Future of Communication. In addition, there will be several events associated with the 50th anniversary celebration.

Proposals are Due 10 January 2007

Join a distinguished group of researchers and industry practitioners for an energetic and friendly conference that encompasses all aspects of professional and technical communication in a world of rapidly changing information and communication technology. Help us look back on 50 years of human communication and look ahead to the next 50!

Suggested Topics

- Usability
- Information design
- Tools/Techniques for collaboration
- Content management/Document technologies
- Software user assistance
- Managing information & communication systems
- Cross-cultural communication
- Engineering management
- Teaching & training
- Visual/Multimedia communication
- Health/Environmental communication
- Information & communication security

Send 1-2 page proposals by January 10, 2007 to: Professor David K. Farkas at **farkas@u.washington.edu**.

For more information visit: **http://www.ieeepcs.org/ipcc2007**.

Seeking an IEEE-PCS Webmaster

If you are interested, and have the required skills and experience, consider applying to become the next PCS Webmaster. PCS is in the process now of revamping both its web site (**www.ieeepcs.org**) and its electronic communication forum, PECom (**https://www.ieeecommunities.org/ieee.pcs**). We're looking for a new volunteer webmaster to help improve the quality of both so that they become more useful, engaging electronic resources. The Webmaster is automatically a member (and a very valued one!) of the PCS Electronic Information Committee.

As PCS Webmaster, you would contribute to the redesign of the site and forum, and after that process is completed, you would continue to maintain both. The details of all the position's duties as well as experience and skills required to be eligible for it are listed below. Applications will be accepted and reviewed until the position is filled.

If you have questions, contact **Brian Still**, PCS Electronic Information Committee Chair.

Webmaster Position Qualifications

Position Title:	Webmaster
Position Closing Date:	Open until filled
Pay:	N/A (volunteer part-time position)
PCS Membership Required:	Not to apply but must be IEEE PCS student or full member to hold the position

Position Duties:

Responsible for performing day-to-day site maintenance on IEEE-PCS website, ensuring navigation and browser compatibility, providing as-needed consultation or programming for other PCS electronic information projects (i.e., Newsletter, IPCC), and maintaining and developing small web applications. Additional responsibilities include writing maintainable code, serving on the EIC committee, assisting in the development of updated layouts, updating all site content, and advising PCS on how to best optimize its content for online deployment.

Required Skills/Experience:

- 2+ years HTML and CSS hand-coding experience (i.e., coding without the aid of an HTML WYSIWYG editor program).
- 2+ years Dreamweaver experience (including the ability to create and edit Dreamweaver templates).
- 2+ years experience using PHP/MySQL to create, deploy and maintain database-driven applications.
- Thorough knowledge of browser compatibility issues, image conversion for online use, and W3C accessibility guidelines.
- Basic familiarity with image editing applications such as Fireworks or Photoshop.

- Willingness and availability to post reasonable content additions or changes to the IEEE PCS Web site in less than 72 hours.
- Active interest in IEEE and the Professional Communication field.

How to Apply:

If you are interested and possess the required skills and experience above, please send an email to **Brian Still**, Electronic Information Committee Chair.

The email should include a brief statement of interest and an attached resume/vita. URLs of web sites previously designed and deployed also would be helpful.

IEEE-USA Seeks Articles for *Today's Engineer*

by George McClure

PCS has members who write clearly and well on various topics. We are looking for authors who would be willing to offer articles (750 to 1500 words) on writing tips, presentations, organizing proposals - even recasting résumés - or other topics that would be welcomed by our 16,000+ monthly readers.

Technology topics can be made interesting, too.

Contact: George McClure at **g.mcclure@ieee.org**.

Technical Communication Special Issue Seeking Submissions

Contributed by Kirk St. amant

500-word Proposal Due:	15 December 2006
Draft Manuscript Due:	15 March 2007
Final Paper Due :	15 June 2007
Publication Date:	November 2007

Technical Communication, the journal of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), is currently soliciting article proposals for an upcoming special issue on the review and assessment of technical communication programs in higher education. This special issue will be published in November 2007, and the guest editors are Kirk St.Amant of Texas Tech University and Cynthia Nahrwold of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Description

The review process is central to creating and maintaining effective programs in any field. In technical communication, this process is made more complex as the discipline draws from industry and academic practices when preparing students for

life after graduation. Additionally, the nature of instructional delivery is changing as more schools develop online classes and degree programs to address the needs of different students. These factors mean the program review process in technical communication must be a subject of continual research and updating for it to address industry, academic, and technology trends in a way that provides meaningful feedback to departments. This special issue of Technical Communication will examine how program review and program assessment processes should be viewed, practiced, and revised to develop courses and curricula that address the needs of academe and industry today and in the future.

Possible Topics for This Issue

Ideas we want to examine in this special issue include how the program review or program assessment processes can do the following:

- Prepare or revise programs for the business and social environments of the future
- Bridge the academic and industry divide through educational and research partnerships
- Include industry in the program review, assessment, and development processes
- Develop criteria for conducting effective and meaningful program reviews and assessments
- Establish criteria for reviewing and assessing new (for example, online) approaches and programs
- Internationalize the review process
- Use the program review process to create educational standards across the field
- Foster new research agendas and foci that address teaching, research, and practice equally
- Address new models for delivering instruction
- Develop courses and curricula that best prepare students for life after graduation

To that end, the guest editors welcome proposals for articles addressing these or related topics.

Types of Submissions

The guest editors welcome case studies and reports on experiences related to these processes; opinion pieces; literature reviews and annotated bibliographies; original research; and tips or best practices for implementing program reviews or assessments within a university, college, or community college setting.

Contact Information

Completed proposals or questions about either proposal topics or this special issue should be sent to Kirk St.Amant at **kirk.st-amant@ttu.edu**. All proposals and papers will be peer-reviewed.

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Society News: AdCom News

Next AdCom Meeting

By IEEE-PCS AdCom

The next meeting will be sometime in early February. The winter meeting is a virtual meeting done via conference call, so contact **Mark Haselkorn** or **Muriel Zimmerman** if you have agenda items.

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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.*

Aizu University

Illinois Institute of Technology

Aizu University in Japan: Assistant and Associate Professors

Contributed by Thomas Orr

Department:	Center for Language Research School of Computer Science and Engineering
University:	University of Aizu
Position(s) Available:	Assistant and Associate Professor
Type of Position:	Full-time, tenure-track
Closing Date for Applications:	**November 6, 2006** (or until job is filled)
Anticipated Start Date:	April 1, 2007 (or shortly thereafter)
Work Environment:	International, multilingual working-environment, with equal opportunities and benefits for faculty of all nationalities
URL:	**http://www.u-aizu.ac.jp/**

Qualifications:

- Doctorate in Applied Linguistics, Technical Communication, ELT, ESP, EST, or related field
- Scholarly publications, presentations, and professional experience
- Native or near-native English-speaker proficiency
- Ability to teach/research academic and workplace English for students, faculty,and working professionals in computer science, IT, and related technical/business fields
- Intelligent, personable, innovative, and enthusiastic

Duties:

Teach 4-5 classes per semester (one class is 90 minutes per week), develop original, innovative instruction, participate in projects, serve on committees, conduct research, network internationally, and publish widely

Salary:

Based on experience and qualifications

Benefits:

- Subsidized furnished housing in faculty apartments within walking distance of the university
- Large, well-equipped private office in modern building
- New-employee allowance for computer equipment
- Well-equipped, air-conditioned, high-tech classrooms
- Annual budget for research, domestic conference travel, academic memberships, etc.
- Eligibility for one annual overseas conference trip
- Internal grant opportunities for special research projects/conferences
- Consulting and other business activities permitted
- Subsidies for special extra-curricular classes
- Winter utilities allowance
- Two bonuses per year
- Full-time employment till age 65 with retirement and health benefits
- One-way transportation costs to Aizuwakamatsu
- Shipping expense allowance
- Scenic setting close to ski and hot spring resorts, national parks, rivers, lakes, mountains, museums, castle, historical district, shopping, etc.
- Two and a half hours from Tokyo by train

Application Package:

1) Cover letter
2) CV
3) Copies of two best papers
4) Three recent letters of recommendation
5) Photocopies of university diplomas
6) URLs of any online work or educational materials

All documents should be sent to the following address (via hardcopy or digital)

Professor Kesen
Office of Planning and Management
University of Aizu
Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima 965-8580 Japan

Attention: CLR Faculty Selection Committee

Email: **position@u-aizu.ac.jp**

The University of Aizu is the first university in Japan solely dedicated to computer science and engineering. It has

approximately 1,200 students at the undergraduate and graduate level, and about half of its faculty are non-Japanese, coming from roughly 10 different countries. The University is officially bilingual and all official meetings/documents are conducted/printed in both English and Japanese.

The University of Aizu is located in Aizuwakamatsu City, an historic castle town of scenic beauty with a population of nearly 120,000.

Illinois Institute of Technology: Assistant Professor

Contributed by Kathryn Riley

Department:	Humanities
University:	Illinois Institute of Technology
Position(s) Available:	Assistant Professor of Technical Communication
Type of Position:	Full-time, entry-level, tenure-track
Closing Date for Applications:	**Review begins Oct. 16, 2006 and continues until position is filled**
Anticipated Start Date:	August 2007
Work Environment:	The department offers B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in technical communication; B.S. degrees in humanities and in journalism of science, technology, and business; and certificates in several areas (including instructional design). IIT offers interprofessional, technology-focused curricula that prepare the university's 6,200 students for leadership roles in a complex and culturally diverse global workplace.
URL:	**http://www.iit.edu/departments/humanities/**

Duties:

Teaching responsibilities in graduate and upper-division undergraduate offerings in technical communication. Advising and thesis supervision expected. The successful candidate will have a strong research and publication agenda that will directly contribute to the growth of our graduate programs in technical communication.

Qualifications:

Must have Ph.D. (in hand by time of appointment) in field related to our graduate programs in technical communication. We invite applicants with education, experience, and research interest in any area of technical communication; areas of particular interest include theory and practice of (a) instructional design and learning technology (especially for workplace settings or distance learning) and (b) information architecture (especially Web design, knowledge management, or informatics). Demonstrated ability to conduct and publish research in area related to technical communication; ability to attract research funding highly desirable. Documented successful teaching experience at the college level.

Salary and Benefits:

Competitive.

Submission Guidelines:

- Curriculum vitae
- cover letter detailing research agenda and teaching experience
- three letters of recommendation
- article-length writing sample.

Send to:

Dr. Susan Feinberg
Chair, TC Search
Lewis Department of Humanities
218 Siegel Hall
3301 S. Dearborn
Illinois Institute of Technology
Chicago, IL 60616

About IIT:

Illinois Institute of Technology is a private university whose areas of study include engineering, science, psychology, architecture, business, design, law, and the humanities. IIT offers interprofessional, technology-focused curricula that prepare the university's 6,200 students for leadership roles in a complex and culturally diverse global workplace. The 120-acre architecturally historic campus, designed by Mies van der Rohe, is about 10 minutes south of the Chicago Loop and one mile west of Lake Michigan.

Illinois Institute of Technology is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

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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**.

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@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 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 2006

by Kit Brown

The following table shows the proposed themes for each issue through January 2006. If something particularly timely occurs during the year, these themes may change.

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

Editorial Schedule for 2006-07

Month	Theme
November 2006	Usability
December 2006	Technology
January 2007	Trends
February	Technical Review Process
March	Service to the World
April	Information Architecture
May	Visual Communication
June	Technical Literacy
July/August	Accessibility
September	Creative Process in Engineering
October	Presentation Skills
November	International Communication
December	Standards

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Guidelines

Book and Website Review Guidelines

by Kit brown

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.