



Newsletter



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Evaluating Effectiveness of Information Products with a Four-Level Model

BY SAUL CARLINER

If the value of our work is in turning information into knowledge, how can we ensure that the content we publish is perceived as knowledge rather than simply information? The short answer is that there is no easy answer. But there are approaches to evaluating information that help technical communicators determine how their content is performing....[Read more](#).

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It's easy to get caught up in the speed of our hectic lifestyles both at home and at work. If you're finding that stress and chaos is becoming the norm, it's time to transform the storm into calm. Here are a few tips that from author Michelle LaBrosse uses to manage stress and keep projects flowing....[Read more](#).

History of Technical Communication

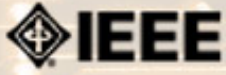
A. Stanley Higgins and the History of STC's Journal

Higgins served as editor of STC's journal from 1961 to 1976 - a stint of 15 years. The 86-year-old wordsmith now lives in a retirement community in Florida. "I think I'm most proud of the fact that I kept the journal going," Higgins writes....[Read more](#).

Transactions New

Using the web: IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication's online presence

Our IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication will be taking advantage of its website more often. This article describes some of the new features... [Read More](#).



Feature

Evaluating Effectiveness of Information Products with a Four-Level Model

by Saul Carliner

For those of us who produce information for a living, the knowledge economy-in theory-should present a terrific opportunity. In most schemes, knowledge is a resource that is valued over information. As Richard Saul Wurman describes in his book *Information Anxiety*, information is facts put into some general context; knowledge is information presented in a way that people can apply it.

Put more bluntly, providing information is a "commodity," something that anyone can do. Providing knowledge is a service that adds value to information-and brings added value to information.

If the value of our work is in turning information into knowledge, how can we ensure that the content we publish is perceived as knowledge rather than simply information? The short answer is that there is no easy answer. But there are approaches to evaluating information that help technical communicators determine how their content is performing.

A Model from the Field of Training

People who evaluate training programs often use a four-level framework that was first proposed by Donald Kirkpatrick in 1959 (Table 1).

Level	Name	Issues Assessed at this Level
I	Reaction	Assesses participants' initial reactions to a course. That, in turn, offers insights into participants' satisfaction with a course. Trainers usually assess this through a survey, often called a "smiley sheet," or with focus groups and similar methods to receive more called qualitative feedback.
II	Learning	Assesses the amount of information that participants learned. Trainers usually assess this with a criterion-referenced test. The criteria explicitly state the skills that participants should be able to perform after taking a course.
III	Transfer	Assesses the amount of material that participants actually use in everyday work 6 weeks to 6 months (perhaps longer) after taking the course. This assessment is based on the objectives of the course and assessed through tests, observations, surveys, and interviews with co-workers and supervisors.
IV	Business results	Assesses the impact of the training course on the performance of the organization 6 months to 2 years after the course. Impact is, at the least, assessed in terms of performance on a significant business metric, such as the effect of learning on calls to the response line, errors in a process, or sales made. At the most, impact is assessed in financial terms.

Table 1: Kirkpatrick's Four Levels (Kirkpatrick, 1994)

Although some aspects of this model transfer well to technical communication, other aspects do not.

Level 1: Reaction

We, too, can track the satisfaction of our users. Many technical communicators attempt to do so through Comment Forms at the end of some printed communication products, like user's guides and reference manuals. But most Comment Forms don't assess user satisfaction, they merely identify errors in the communication products. Furthermore, technical communicators do not always include such comment forms or provide users with any opportunity to provide feedback.

Level 2: Learning

Most of the information that technical communicators produce is:

- Disposable, intended only for one use, such as installing software
- Motivational, such as demonstrations that are intended for prospective consumers
- Only intended for occasional use, such as advanced tips and techniques in user's guides.

Once people use the information, they no longer need it or are not likely to use it for a long time, and are not expected to retain it. Measuring learning in such instances seems inappropriate. What matters instead to technical communicators is the users' ability to perform specific tasks described in the communication product.

Level 3: Transfer

Most assessments of users' ability to perform tasks also assess how effectively users can transfer technical information to the task at hand. For those technical communication products that are "disposable," or only intended for occasional use the bulk of technical communication products the two levels can be therefore assessed at one time. For technical communication products intended to train or motivate, a separate assessment of transfer is still appropriate.

Level 4: Results

This is the measurement of the value added by technical communication products as they relate to a business objective. For example, is the communication product expected to reduce expenses, generate revenues, or help the organization comply with a governmental, industry, or corporate regulation? By identifying measurements we can track whether the product achieved those goals. For example, if a communication product is supposed to increase revenue by 4 percent, do the business's measures indicate this? Or if it is supposed to reduce support costs by 5 percent, did the support costs go down?

In addition to these limitations, the Kirkpatrick model primarily focuses on learners' perspectives on a program. Although learners are important, in many instances, they are not the only stakeholders. All trainers also have to satisfy their clients or management, whether working externally as consultants and contractors or internally as employees. The Kirkpatrick model fails to gauge client satisfaction with a learning program.

A Four-Level Model for Evaluating Technical Information Products

Despite these limitations of the Kirkpatrick model, it can still be applied to the evaluation of technical communication products. Table 2 summarizes the adapted model.

Level	Name	Purpose
1	User Satisfaction	Assesses how users feel about a given communication product
2	User Performance	Measures the extent to which users can perform the main objectives
3	Client Performance	Measures the extent to which the communication product met the business objectives
4	Client Satisfaction	Assesses how clients feel about the information development process in general and the experience of working with you in particular

Table 2: The Kirkpatrick Model Adapted to Technical Communication (Carliner 1997)

Level 1: Assessing User Satisfaction

A survey of user satisfaction assesses whether users can find the information they seek, whether that information answers their questions, and the user's level of satisfaction with communication product. Many web-based user assistance systems use this approach. Somewhere on the page, they ask a question like: "Did this information help you?" Users respond yes or no. Some systems then ask users to explain their response.

More comprehensive satisfaction surveys have been proposed, such as the satisfaction-focused Reader's Comment Form I proposed in a 2003 article in *Intercom* (Carliner 2003). Still other organizations evaluate satisfaction by including questions about communication products in more comprehensive employee and customer satisfaction surveys.

Level 2: Assessing User Performance

This type of evaluation determines whether users can perform the main tasks that the communication product describes. It assumes that before you began developing the communication product, you developed observable and measurable objectives for the content describing:

- The tasks users should be able to perform after reading the information
- The conditions under which users would perform those tasks
- The level of acceptable performance for the task

(If these look like learning objectives used instructional designers, that's because these are the same things.)

The way you assess user performance varies, depending on the purpose of the communication product. Note that in all the following cases of assessing user performance, the assessment tool emerges directly from main content objectives established before developing the communication product.

Training: To assess user performance for training products, conduct a learning test that derives test questions directly from the objectives. For example, if an objective indicates that users should be able to name five types of communication products, then the test question could be "Name 5 types of communication products." In more complex situations, use more complex questions. For example, if users should be able to choose the most appropriate programming technique for a given situation, you should provide users with a brief case study, then ask them to choose a technique and explain how they made

the choice.

Marketing: To assess user performance for marketing products, such as a catalog or other promotional piece, do one of the following:

- If users are supposed to order a product, then assess their performance by the accuracy of the order.
- If users are supposed to request more information, then assess their performance by the relevancy of their requests for information.

Sharing Scientific Information: To assess user performance for products intended to share information, you'll need to use indirect means. The ultimate purpose of sharing scientific information is that others use it. Track how the scientific information is used by tracking citations in other articles and books or tracking the creation of derivative works.

Using a Product, Service, or Policy: To assess information products that describe how to use something, assess the user performance. Do so by observing how easily and quickly users perform the intended tasks. Usability tests are the most common means of doing so. The heart of a usability test is a usability scenario, which describes a real world situation in which users would actually perform the task named in the main objective.

Level 3: Assessing Client Performance

This type of evaluation measures the value added by technical communication products. by measuring how well the communication product is able to meet the pre-defined business goals it was trying to achieve. Business objectives for a communication product might pertain to:

- Reducing expenses
- Increasing revenues
- Complying with corporate, industry, or government regulations

Assessing client performance requires that you identify a business measure, such as expenses or revenues, and establish a baseline for that measure before the communication product is released. Unless you track the trend in these measurements for a period before you introduce the communication product, you cannot, with any credibility, assert that your product caused the change in business performance. Track the changes and note related events for a while after the release, as well, to get a full assessment of the impact of the communication product.

For example, a business objective might be to keep support costs under \$3.4 million for the coming year. You would begin tracking support costs immediately after the project begins (and before the release of the communication product). Are support costs increasing quickly or slowly (or decreasing)? Then, continue to track support costs through the entire year after the communication product is published. Note the trend. Also note other events that might have had an effect on your selected measurement. Suppose, for instance, that sales remained flat. The lack of additional demand for support services could just as easily account for the containment of support costs as the publication of a communication product.

Level 4: Assessing Client Satisfaction

This type of evaluation assesses clients' feeling about the information development process in general and the experience of working with you in particular. It is the type of evaluation that is overlooked by the Kirkpatrick model.

In some ways, client satisfaction can be the easiest type of satisfaction to assess. If a client gives you repeat business, the client is sufficiently satisfied with your work.

But not every client gives you repeat business because they want to, some give it because they have to. The client might work for the same organization as you and be required to use your services, no matter how the client feels about the value you provide. Or the client might be very satisfied with your services, but may simply not have any additional projects.

Assessing client satisfaction in the absence of repeat business presents a dilemma. Satisfaction surveys, like the one suggested for assessing user satisfaction, serve little good for measuring client satisfaction. Clients may hesitate to answer such as survey honestly, particularly internal corporate clients who have no choice on whose services to use.

A performance review with a client (or an employer) reviews the objectives of the assignment and assesses how well you met them. For an information project, the assessment will likely focus on your ability to meet schedules, budgets, and quality guidelines, and whether the information project met its objectives and business needs.

The client might also assess you on the perceived quality of your work, such as their affection for your writing style and assessment of your creativity. Although subjective, this feedback tells you how the client responded to the communication product.

Implementing an Evaluation Program in Your Organization

Underlying many conversations about this and the Kirkpatrick model, two assumptions usually arise:

- Organizations need to perform all four levels of evaluation to have an effective evaluation program
- If an organization performs all four levels and receives satisfactory results, they "prove" that technical communication is a valuable service and guarantee future business

Neither assumption is true. Most organizations do not need to perform all 4 levels of evaluation for every project. Extensive, four-level evaluation consumes hours of a specially skilled (and highly paid) evaluator's time and most project budgets cannot stretch that far. But in many cases, even if the funding is available, the effort would not be worthwhile because the evaluation will only confirm what the clients already know. For example, if evaluations of a maintenance manual have already indicated that users can perform the intended tasks and business objectives have been achieved, then a project that simply updates that manual is likely to achieve the same results. An evaluation to demonstrate this likely success is probably not warranted.

That concept of "demonstration" is essential to understanding why technical communicators cannot assume evaluations "prove" the effectiveness of their work. No evidence exists that can prove beyond reasonable doubt the effectiveness of any particular piece of technical communication. The best that the evidence can do is suggest effectiveness based on a small sample of users. Rather than an act of proof, demonstrating effectiveness is an act of persuasion—a rhetorical act.

But the more evidence that supports the argument that a particular technical communication product is effective, the more likely stakeholders will be convinced. One piece of evidence is more persuasive than none. Evidence that was formally and rigorously collected is more persuasive than an unsolicited comment. Most significantly, the mere fact that evidence was actively sought and collected often persuades clients that their technical communicators are focused on producing

knowledge.

And in the knowledge economy, that's as good as money.

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Tools and Technology

Technology as Cod Liver Oil

by Neil Perlin and Mark Lewis

It's good for you in the long run but terrible going down...

New technology that alters familiar ways of working often gets greeted like cod liver oil. PC users panned Windows in the late 1980s because it forced touch-typists to take their hands off the keyboard in order to use the mouse, but Windows basically created today's PC market. Laptop users panned early touch pads (and still do because the pads become skiddy from accumulated skin oils) but touch pads make it easier to use laptops on cramped airline seat trays. And so on...

Not all new technologies succeed, but enough do that they become part of the background; early complaints about them seem quaint in retrospect. In other words, it helps to take a long view when dealing with annoying new technologies. This column looks at two fairly new technologies that illustrate that point - the Microsoft Word 2007 ribbon, discussed by Mark Lewis, DITA Product Manager for Usability at In.vision Research (www.InvisionResearch.com), (who also suggested the idea for this column), and MadCap Flare's use of styles, which I'll discuss.

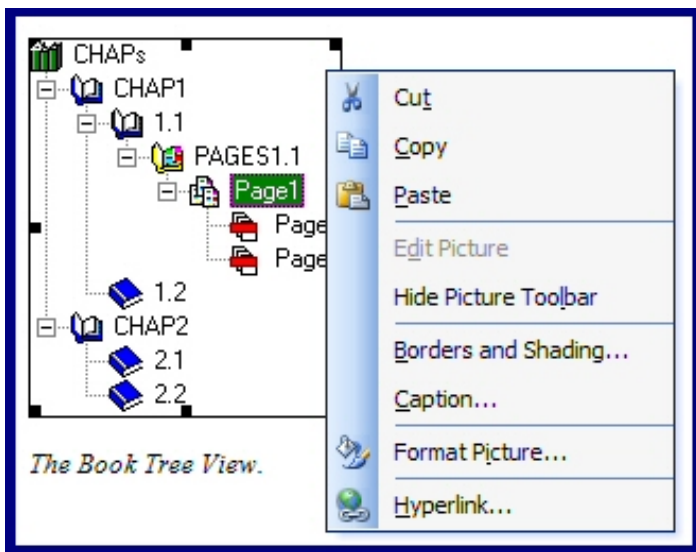
The Microsoft® Word Ribbon...Explained

What

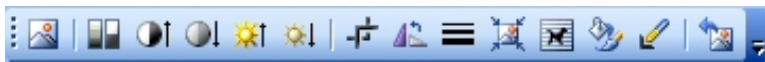
Where are my favorite Word features and what is this Ribbon thing? You will be proficient and fast in Word again, once you understand the simple concept around what the Ribbon is and why it appeared. The transition to Word 2007 will become "mostly " painless.

Background

Right-clicking on a paragraph, image, or table in the Word 2003 (or earlier) canvas displays a shortcut menu that contains commands specific to the object that you clicked on. For example, right-clicking on an image displays the shortcut menu with image-related commands like Edit Picture, Format Picture, and Caption.



In addition my Word preferences are set to show the Picture toolbar when my current selection is an image. HmMMMM.

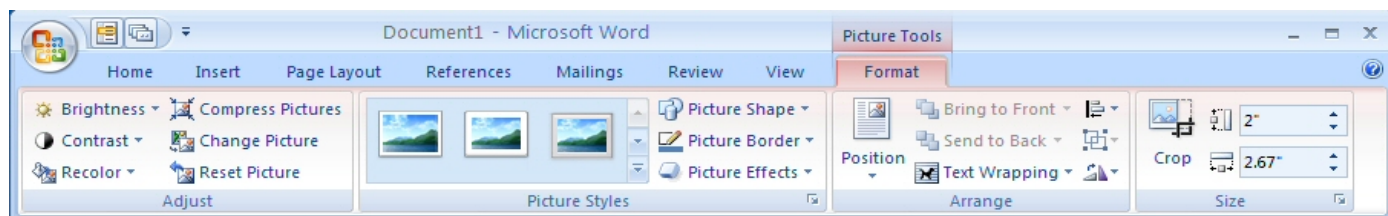


Why

Why does Word provide shortcut menus? So you don't have to hunt through the menu hierarchy and level of dialogs and tabs to find that command or feature that you want. The shortcut menu provides quick access to the commands and features specific to the object you clicked on.

So...

The Ribbon changes when you change your selection in the Word canvas. When you click on a paragraph, image, or table in the Word 2007 canvas, the Ribbon changes to display commands specific to the object that you clicked on.



Therefore

The Ribbon is really just a big shortcut menu. It's both dynamic and context sensitive, providing quick and easy access to the commands and features specific to your current selection. But, instead of having the limitations of a shortcut menu, the Ribbon categorizes and organizes the commands, and provides more commands in all that extra real estate. Knowing this, you can control the Ribbon and become fast and proficient in Word again.

The Microsoft Evangelist that visited the STC Suncoast chapter told us that of all the requests for new features in Word, 70% of them were for features that were already in the application, the user just couldn't find them. And so, the Ribbon was born.

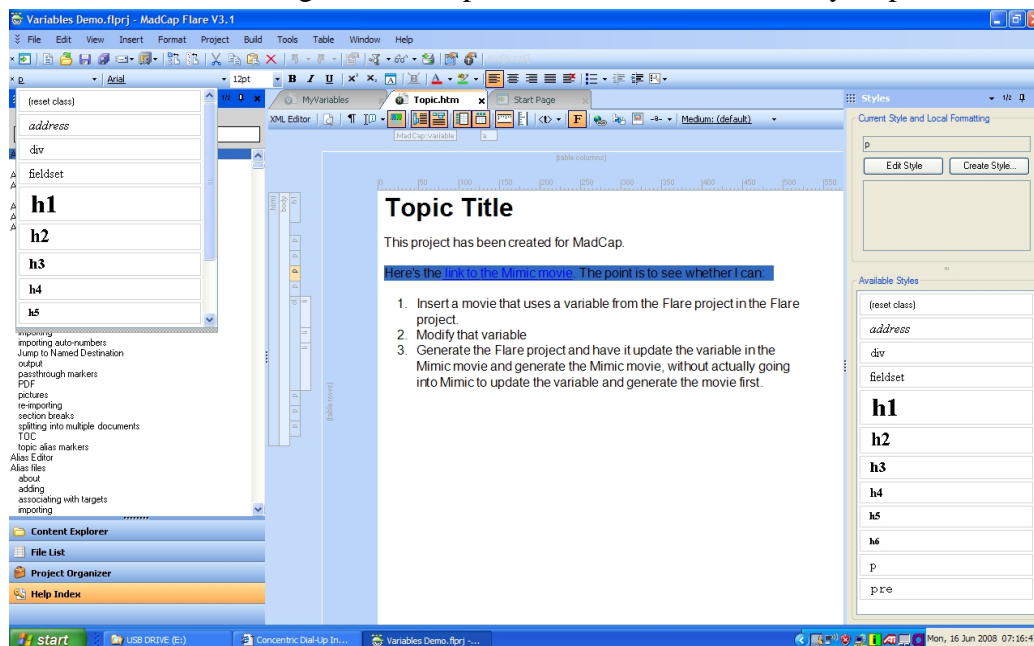
MadCap Flare's Styles and Style Editor... Explained

MadCap Software's Flare (www.madcapsoftware.com) is the newest entry in the "help authoring tool" market. One of the biggest differences between Flare and other such tools is how Flare lets authors assign styles to content. If you don't understand how it works, Flare is very confusing. But once you do, you'll become faster, more efficient, and more standards-compliant. (In the interests of disclosure, I'm certified by MadCap and do a lot of training on Flare.)

The differences manifest themselves in two ways - how we access the list of available styles and understanding how that list works.

Accessing the List of Styles

Like other tools, Flare lets authors users assign styles from a dropdown on the left side of the text formatting toolbar. But it also lets authors assign styles from a Styles pane on the right side of the screen. (The image below shows both - the standard text formatting toolbar dropdown on the left, and the Styles pane on the right.)



These two features seem redundant since they both offer the same styles. However, the Styles pane makes it possible to hide the text formatting toolbar, which eliminates local formatting in topics. Hiding the text formatting toolbar forces authors to use styles. This has been desirable for a long time, but we couldn't hide the text formatting toolbar since this would have hidden the styles pulldown as well.

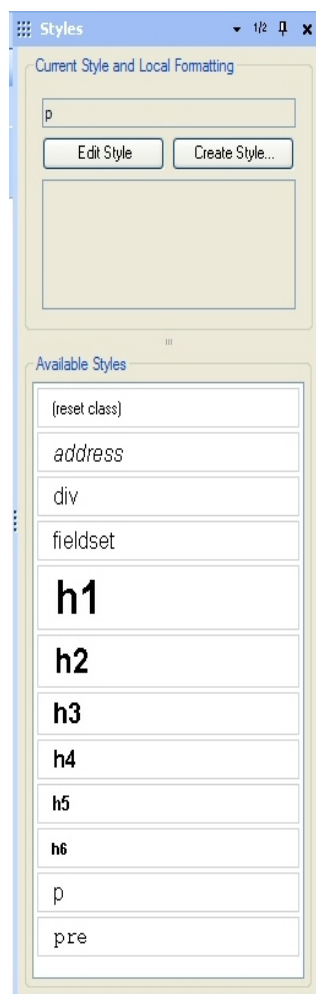
Many new authors don't understand why this is important, and thus don't understand the point of the Styles pane at first. But once they understand why it pays to use styles from a style sheet, then the Styles pane feature makes perfect sense. More difficult to understand is how Flare presents the available styles.

Understanding the Available Styles list

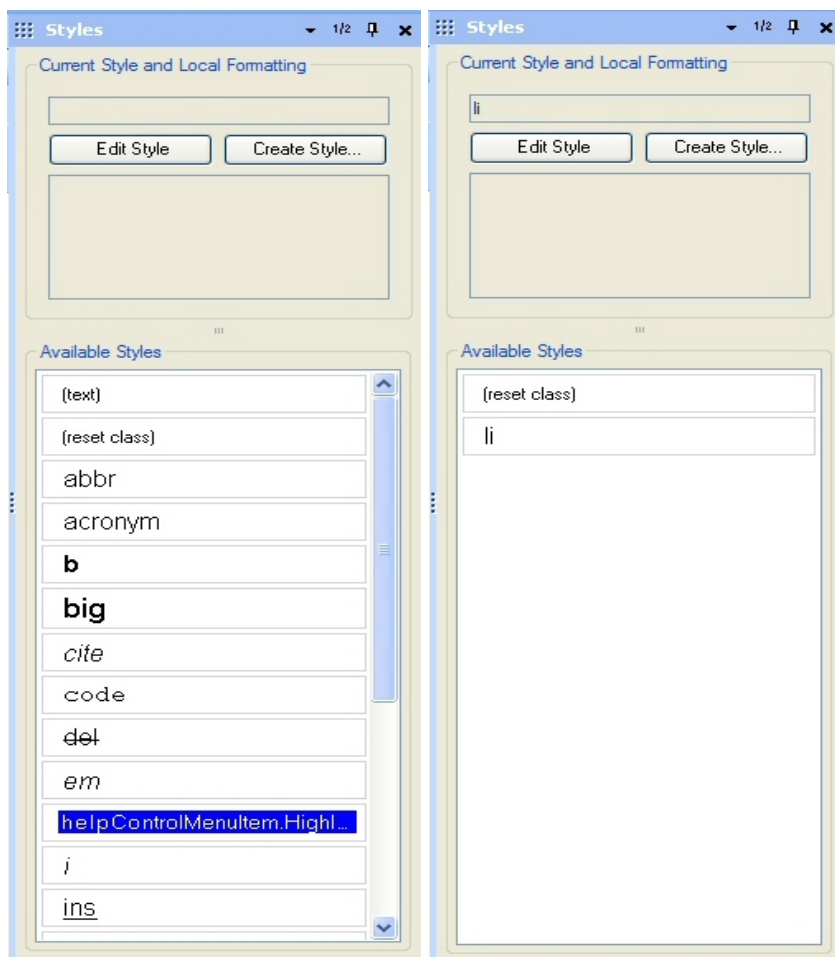
Many new Flare authors complain that the list of available styles changes at random. The list of styles actually does change, but it's very logical once you understand it. Like the Word Ribbon, Flare's styles list is dynamic and context sensitive. However, this is so different from what most users are accustomed to that it's confusing at first. Basically, Flare detects

your position in a topic and only displays the relevant styles rather than all the styles. Here's an example...

If I display the styles list in the Styles pane (clicking on the text formatting toolbar dropdown gives the same result), and click on the first paragraph without selecting any text, here's the list of available styles.



But if you select some text in the first paragraph, notice how the list of styles changes. Click on any item in the numbered list and notice how the list of available styles changes again.



What's happening is that Flare knows your current selection or location in a topic and only shows the relevant styles. Once you understand this, it's a huge time-saver since you no longer have to scroll through dozens of styles to find the one you want. The problem is that this is very different from most other tools, which simply list all your styles, no matter whether they're relevant or not. This, incidentally, is a good argument for getting formal training on your authoring tools. Without that training and without analogies from previous experience to guide you through this new interface feature, many authors waste a lot of time trying to figure out what's going on.

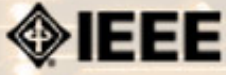
Summary

Today, the Word 2007 Ribbon and Flare's styles feature are unusual and different. But look at them in a positive light to see how they can make you more efficient. A year from now, you may not be able to imagine how you worked without them.

Neil Perlin is president of Hyper/Word Services (www.hyperword.com) of Tewksbury, MA. He has 29 years experience in technical communication, with 23 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.

Mark Lewis works for YOU, the tech writer, and the information architect. Mark Lewis is the DITA Product Manager for Usability and a product Evangelist for In.vision Research. He designs the user experience for many of In.vision's structured authoring products allowing everyday authors to create reusable content without knowing the details of XML syntax. Mark presents on object oriented design methodologies to non-programmers to help jumpstart their understanding of structured authoring, information architecture and the promise of XML. Mark is an active member of STC and OASIS DITA TC, and creator and manager of the **WritingOBJECTively group** on The Content Wrangler Community.

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Professor Grammar

Passive voice

by Professor Grammar

Those of you have done a fair amount of technical writing undoubtedly have had an editor scribble the annoying comment "Passive Voice" in the margin of your work. But what exactly does it mean?

Does it mean that you've been too wishy-washy as a writer, letting the user walk all over you? Did you say "Issue this command, if you really want to, but you don't have to," rather than demanding "ISSUE THIS COMMAND!" Not exactly.

Writers create passive voice by using some form of the verb "to be" in conjunction with another verb. For example, I can rewrite "You can change the BlowUp option" to "The BlowUp option can be changed by you." In this case, "can be" is the clue that this sentence is passive. Although the sentence is clear because it contains the phrase "by you," it's not as concise as the active version. Of course by now you all know that we should say "To change the BlowUp option, ..."

The more insidious enemy hides in sentences where writers leave out the agent of the action. For example: "Before processing, the ID must be checked for access privileges." Who checks the ID, the product, or the user?

Sometimes we use this vague construction because either the user or a program that the user writes can perform the action. Even in this case, you should make it clear that the user must do the checking: "You must check the ID for access privileges."

Don't be afraid to use your product name, or a feature of the product, if it performs the action. For example:

- Passive: "By default, arguments are passed by reference."
- Active: "By default, the Call statement passes arguments by reference."

Finally, sometimes writers make a sentence active simply by changing the verb form.

- Passive: "The Widget window is opened."
- Active: "The Widget window opens."

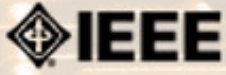
How can you achieve active voice?

Whenever you catch yourself writing these words: "be, is, are, was, were," rethink your sentence. Better yet, after you've written a passage, read through it, and circle all these words. Figure out who performs the action, and put the agent in the sentence, if possible.

Not only will your readers and editors thank you, but your writing will change from wishy-washy to forceful, emphatic, and maybe even lively (what, in technical information?!)

Copyright (c) 1996, 2005 by IBM Corporation. Used with permission. Professor Grammar is an advisor to the IBM Silicon Valley Laboratory Editing Council. Each month, she sends a lesson to the technical writers at the laboratory. Many of Professor Grammar's lessons are based on tenets described in the Prentice-Hall book, Developing Quality Technical Information: A Handbook for Writers and Editors, which was recently authored by the Council.

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Writing

How Verbal Variety Kills Comprehension

by Philip Yaffe

As any teacher knows, saying something once is tantamount to not saying it at all. People may recognize an idea the first time it is presented, but they almost never assimilate it and make it their own until it is repeated.

Nevertheless, in expository (non-fiction) writing, repetition seems to be a no-no. The purpose of expository writing is generally to inform or instruct, yet young writers are often enjoined to avoid repetition at all costs.

I became aware of this bizarre and detrimental phenomenon by living in Europe and learning other languages. I have been a resident of Belgium since 1974. I speak French fluently, and have working knowledge of Dutch, German and Spanish.

Everyone I know who writes documents in these languages will do just about anything to avoid repeating a word. It seems that when they were in school, they were told that if they repeated a word, their hands would be cut off. Verbal variety was a prime virtue; word repetition a prime sin.

Growing up in California, I don't recall this taboo being pounded into my head the way it seems to be here in Europe, but maybe I wasn't paying attention. In any event, while the advice is sound, the way people have interpreted it is wrong.

Intentionally used, repetition improves rather than degrades writing. The key word is "intentionally". As in teaching -- expository writing is a kind of teaching -- saying something once seldom gets the point across. The solution, we are told, is to say it several times, but in different ways. However, constantly changing vocabulary for the sake of variety more often than not leads to confusion, rather than clarity. Consider the following:

A. I saw a big dog. I am afraid of big dogs, so I cautiously moved away.

B. I saw a big dog. I am afraid of large canines, so I cautiously moved away.

Changing "big dogs" to "large canines" adds nothing to the text, and in fact detracts from it. This of course is a made-up example, but I have seen many real examples equally ridiculous.

Consistently using the same terminology can advance your argument while mixing terminology can hobble it. This is true both in expository (non-fiction) and creative (fiction) writing.

But you don't have to take my word for it. Here are excerpts from two of the finest pieces of writing anyone has ever

produced: The Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln and The Mark Anthony Soliloquy by William Shakespeare. One is fiction, the other non-fiction. Both make undeniably effective use of repetition.

The Gettysburg Address

This speech was delivered by President Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on November 19, 1863 to mark a pivotal victory in the American Civil War. The repetitions are indicated by a double asterisk (**)

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that **nation -- or any **nation so **conceived and so **dedicated -- can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that **war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that **field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that **nation might **live.

"It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot **dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have **consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

"The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be **dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

"It is rather for us to be here **dedicated to the great task remaining before us. That from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of **devotion. That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom. And that government of the people, by **the people, for **the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Stirring stuff, isn't it?

Now let's look at just the first two paragraphs to see what it might have looked like if Lincoln had avoided repetition.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that this country -- or any nation-state founded and pledged in this way -- can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that conflict. We have come to dedicate a portion of this patch of ground as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that homeland might continue to exist"

Hardly the same, is it?

Marc Anthony Soliloquy

This speech was delivered by Mark Anthony in Shakespeare's play "The Tragedy of Julius Caesar". Once again, the repetitions are marked by a double asterisk (**)

'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones. So let it be with **Caesar.

'The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious. If it were so, it was a grievous fault, and **grievously hath Caesar answer'd it. Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest-for Brutus is an **honorable man; so are they all, all **honorable men-come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.

'He was my friend, faithful and just to me. But Brutus says he was **ambitious, and Brutus is an **honorable man.

'He hath brought many captives home to Rome, whose ransoms did the general coffers fill. Did this in Caesar seem **ambitious? When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept. **Ambition should be made of sterner stuff. Yet Brutus says he was **ambitious, and Brutus is an **honorable man."

The soliloquy continues. Through repetition, the crowd comes to equate Caesar with "saint", Brutus with "murderer", and "honorable" with "dishonorable". The crowd riots and overthrows the junta which, lead by Brutus, only days before had assassinated Caesar to public acclaim.

The Bicentennial Man

It may be argued that the Mark Anthony Soliloquy is not "true fiction", because it is a speech within a play and meant to sound realistic. Much of fiction is description, where verbal variety is virtually obligatory.

Here is a descriptive passage from "The Bicentennial Man", a collection of short stories by Isaac Asimov, a master of both creative and expository writing. Once again, the repetitions are marked with a double asterisk. Try to imagine this passage if each repetition were changed to something else.

**The fact that JN-5 was a radically new type of robot, quite different from anything ever built before, was distressing.

**The fact that JN-5 was a prototype, the first after four earlier attempts ever placed in the field, was more distressing.

**The fact that JN-5 had apparently accomplished something of incalculably importance--and that now might be forever gone -- placed the distress utterly beyond words.

It is not my purpose to argue that verbal variety isn't important, only that blindly changing words to avoid repetition can be counterproductive.

So how can you know when and when not to vary vocabulary?

As in any intellectual endeavor, in writing if you know why you are doing something, rather than simply because it is a rule, chances are you will do it better. The key consideration is. Will changing a word advance the purpose of my text? If yes, then change it. If not, don't.

Early in his career, Pablo Picasso was a classical painter, perhaps on a par with Rubens and Rembrandt. One day he was asked, "If you can paint like that, why do you do this almost childish, abstract stuff?" He is reported to have replied, "You need to understand the rules to know how to creatively break them."

Go, and be creative.

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 T' 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).



Society News: PCS Events

Society Awards Presented at IPCC 2008

By Muriel Zimmerman, PCS Awards Chair and Secretary

The awards banquet is a highlight of each International Professional Communication Conference (IPCC). The Alfred N. Goldsmith Award, the Emily K. Schlesinger Award, and the Ronald S. Blicq Award recognize achievements in the areas of engineering communication, Society service, and distinction in technical communication education, respectively. The Rudolph J. Joenk, Jr. Award is presented for Best Paper in the IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, and the IEEE James M. Lufkin IPCC Best Paper Award honors a paper selected from those submitted for the conference proceedings.



PCS Adcom member George Hayhoe presented the 2008 Goldsmith Award to Katharine Hayhoe, research associate professor in the Department of Geosciences at Texas Technological University. Dr. Katharine Hayhoe was a member of the International Panel on Climate Change, chaired by Al Gore. That group received the 2007 Nobel Prize for Peace.



Immediate Past President of PCS Luke Maki presented the Schlesinger Award to Steven Robinson, who served as PCS Treasurer for six years and also as conference treasurer for many IPCC conferences, including IPCC 2007.



Helen Grady and Muriel Zimmerman presented the Joenk Award for Best Paper in the 2007 Transactions to Paul Lowry, faculty member in the Marriott School at Brigham Young University, and his students Sean Humpherys, Jason Malwitz, and Joshua Nix. Their paper, "A Scientometric Study of the Perceived Quality of Business and Technical Communication Journals," appeared in the December 2007 issue of our Transactions.



Muriel Zimmerman presented the IEEE Lufkin IPCC Best Paper Award to Jeffry Rice, faculty member in the Department of English at the University of Florida, for his paper "From Collaborative to Collective Writing: Producing Knowledge through Web 2.0 Technical Writing Environments."

The Blicq Awardee, Jan Spyridakis, Professor and Department Chair of Technical Communication at the University of Washington, will accept her award at IPCC 2009 in Honolulu.

Looking for Pubs Chair: 3rd Annual RFID Conference

By **Luke Maki**

PCS has an opportunity to once again be technical co-sponsor of the annual RFID Conference, to be held April 27 - 28 in Orlando, Florida. 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.

Anyone who'd like to volunteer to help should contact **Luke Maki** at luke DOT maki AT boeing DOT com.



Society News: Member News

Nominations now open for 2008 Alfred N. Goldsmith Award

By Muriel Zimmerman, PCS Awards Chair

Nominations are now open for 2008 Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for Distinguished Contributions to Engineering Communication.

Members of the technical communication community are invited to submit nominations for the 2008 Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for Distinguished Contributions to Engineering Communication. A nomination form, with links to information about criteria for the award and a list of previous winners, is available online at <http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/index.php?q=node/164>.

Nominations are open until March 1, 2009.

IEEE LAUNCHES MEMBERNET ONLINE DIRECTORY

By Jayne Cerone, IEEE Technical Activities

The IEEE has launched an online member directory designed to encourage peer-to-peer networking within IEEE membership. **memberNet** is the first step in a series of next-generation capabilities that will encourage virtual collaborations between members with similar technical interests, regardless of geography.

While the basic member profile in memberNet contains every member's name and membership grade, each member can indicate by check mark what additional information they would like to also have appear. These may include technical interests, local Section, or IEEE Society affiliation. The memberNet directory, and its opt-in management, is accessible from **myIEEE**. For more information about **IEEE memberNet**, visit <http://www.ieee.org/membernet>.

INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON OPEN ACCESS PUBLISHING MODEL

By Jayne Cerone, IEEE Technical Activities

IEEE announced that it will participate in the SCOAP3 initiative, a global effort to develop an open access publishing model that will make peer-reviewed research articles in the high energy physics field available to online users at no cost. The IEEE agreed that relevant articles from one of its journals, the IEEE Transactions on Nuclear Science, may be used to develop the new publishing model proposed by SCOAP3 (the Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics). A letter signed by the IEEE expressed interest in the initiative, provided it will result in "sustainable" funding and business arrangements to support open access publishing.

IEEE's decision to work with SCOAP3 followed its Board of Directors' decision in November to adopt the IEEE's Principles of Scholarly Publishing in order to provide a framework to evaluate new publishing models.

Read the full press release and full text at the **[IEEE Principles of Scholarly Publishing](#)**.

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Newsletter



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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.

Int'l Symposium on Assessment in Science and Engineering Education

itSMF 2008

METM 2008

ICMIT 2008

CISSE 2008

STC-ETC Chapter conference

International Symposium on Assessment in Science and Engineering Education

Conference:	IEEE Wireless Hive Networks Conference
Dates:	7-8 August 2008
Location:	Center for Language Research, University of Aizu, Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture, Japan
Website:	http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/index.php?q=node/141

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Julia Williams

Professor and Director
Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (USA)

Dr. Marjorie Davis

Professor and Chair
Department of Technical Communication
School of Engineering
Mercer University (USA)

OBJECTIVE: To provide an international forum for presentations, workshops, and discussions on how to effectively assess university programs, courses, teaching materials and methodologies, students for admission, faculty for employment and promotion, student learning, faculty development, university administration, etc. to help university faculty and administrators in schools of science and engineering make wiser, more intelligent data-driven decisions.

Presentation Categories: 20-30 minute papers, 60-minute panel discussions, or 60 minute workshops

500-Word Proposals Received: June 1-30

Letters of acceptance/rejection sent shortly after receipt of individual proposals.

Send Proposals to: t-orr@u-aizu.ac.jp

Presenters are encouraged to write full papers, based on their presentations, for potential publication in the IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication Special Issue on Assessment in Professional Communication: Full papers due: August 15. Full papers are not required, however, for presentation in this symposium.

itSMF USA Fusion 2008

Conference:	Fusion 2008
Dates:	7-10 September 2008
Location:	San Francisco, CA USA
Website:	http://www.itsmfusion.com/

As the fastest growing IT organization in the world, itSMF USA has the expertise necessary to unify IT service management by bringing together professionals and strategies to lead the industry toward a profitable future.

Attended by the industry's best minds and leading experts. Heightened opportunities for networking with fellow professionals, vendors, and implementation partners. Improved event planning with better organization, accommodations, and food. Expanded presentations from desirable speakers within the ITSM industry.

Conference summary

- Workshops: Sunday afternoon and Wednesday
- Exhibits: Sunday PM through Tuesday PM
- Conference: Monday through Wednesday
- Training: Thursday-Saturday (additional cost)

METM 2008

Conference:	Mediterranean Editors and Translators Meeting 2008
Dates:	11-13 September 2008
Location:	Split, Croatia
Website:	http://www.metmeetings.org/?section=metm08_program

Through panel discussions, presentations, plenary sessions and workshops, METM 08 will promote knowledge-building and networking among editors, translators, and other English language supporters who work in the Mediterranean area. In 2008, symposia are planned on multilingual and other types of publication from non-anglophone contexts. Presentation categories encompass research, promising practices, and knowledge updates.

We are considering proposals that will add practical and theoretical range to the preliminary program. Proposals (**due 15 April 2008**) are welcome on the following topics:

- The nature of written or spoken texts in professional disciplines that communicate knowledge internationally through English.
- The processes through which texts are written, prepared for delivery, or prepared for publication in English.
- Any of our association's objectives.

ICMIT 2008

Conference:	4th IEEE International Conference on Management of Innovation & Technology (ICMIT2008)
Dates:	21-24 September 2008
Location:	Bangkok, Thailand
Website:	http://www.ICMIT2008.org

ICMIT2008 is the 4th International Conference on Management of Innovation and Technology, first initiated by the IEEE Engineering Management Society Singapore Chapter in 2000. ICMIT2008 intends to bring together scholars, industrialists, and entrepreneurs interested in improving their research and development, and business applications in innovation and technology management across a global network of diverse platforms. This conference is co-sponsored by IEEE Singapore Section and IEEE Technology Management Council.

ICMIT 2008 will include papers on the following topics:

- Technology Management
- Innovation Policy and Management
- Process Innovation
- Managing IT and E-Commerce
- Knowledge Management
- Project Management
- Supply Chain Management
- Sustainable Development
- Global Production Network
- Technology Intelligence and Planning
- New Product Development
- Entrepreneurship
- Human Resource Management
- Intellectual Property Right and Patent
- R&D Management
- Risk Management

- Six Sigma and Quality Management
- Service Science and Innovation
- Other Technology Management Issues

Authors are requested to submit full papers to the ICMIT 2008 conference via the conference website. The full paper should be no longer than 6 pages, including title of the paper, keywords, name and affiliation of the authors. All submissions will be peer-reviewed for technical merit and content. Accepted papers will be published in the conference proceedings which will appear in IEEEExplore database and indexed by Engineering Index (EI).

CISSE 2008

Conference:	The Fourth International Joint Conferences on Computer, * * Information, and Systems Sciences, and Engineering (CISSE 2008)
Dates:	5-13 December 2008
Location:	Virtual
Proposal Due:	6 October 2008
Acceptance Date:	6 November 2008
Registration Due:	26 November 2008
Website:	http://www.cisse2008online.org

CISSE 2008 provides a virtual forum for presentation and discussion of the state-of the-art research on computers, information and systems sciences and engineering. CISSE 2008 is the fourth conference of the CISSE series of e-conferences.

The virtual conference will be conducted through the Internet using web-conferencing tools, made available by the conference. Authors will be presenting their PowerPoint, audio or video presentations using web-conferencing tools without the need for travel.

Conference sessions will be broadcast to all the conference participants, where session participants can interact with the presenter during the presentation and (or) during the Q&A slot that follows the presentation. This international conference will be held entirely online. The accepted and presented papers will be made available and sent to the authors after the conference both on a DVD (including all papers, powerpoint presentations and audio presentations) and as a book publication.

Conference participants - authors, presenters and attendees - only need an internet connection and sound available on their computers in order to be able to contribute and participate in this international ground-breaking conference. The online structure of this high-quality event will allow academic professionals and industry participants to contribute their work and attend world-class technical presentations based on rigorously refereed submissions, live, without the need for investing significant travel funds or time out of the office.

STC-East Tennessee Conference

Conference:	Practical Conference on Communication: "Technical Communication in a Global Economy"
Dates:	9-11 October 2008
Location:	Chattanooga, TN USA

Proposal Due: 7 July 2008
Website: <http://www.stc-etc.org/pcpc.asp>

PCOC is back! The East Tennessee Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication revives this popular conference at The Chattanooga hotel and conference center in Chattanooga, Tennessee October 10 - 11, 2008. This 25th PCOC event begins with an outdoor evening reception at the hotel Thursday, October 9 and continues in a multi-track, multi-session format in the conference center all day Friday and Saturday.

Keynote speaker Dr. Mark Mendenhall, distinguished business professor and expert in global leadership, will provide insight into the global corporate culture. Fun fall activities in the Chattanooga area make this an ideal conference to attend with family.

For a PDF with all of the "Call for Papers" information, click the following link:
<http://stc-etc.org/PCOC25Call4Papers.pdf>.

For additional information on the conference, go to <http://stc-etc.org/pcoc.asp>.

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Newsletter



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Calls for Articles/Proposals/Courses

Transactions Special Issue

LeaderPoint Executive Experience

Mentors Needed

IEEE Educational Opportunities

IEEE Transactions on Instrumentation and Measurement Special Issue

IEEE Systems Journal Special Issue

Transactions Special Issue

Call for Papers: <http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/index.php?q=node/141>

Proposal Due: various

A special issue is planned for the PCS *Transactions*. Topic is Assessment in Professional Communication.

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**](mailto:c.downer@ieee.org).

Educational Opportunities from IEEE

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

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**](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**](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**](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](mailto:c.torres@ieee.org), or by phone +1 732 981 3425.

IEEE Transactions on Instrumentation and Measurement **Special Issue on Biometric Instrumentation and Measurement**

Call for Papers: <http://www.dti.unimi.it/~piuri/pages/TIM-SpecialIssueBiometricIMCFP.pdf>

Submission Period: February 15 - March 1, 2009

Publication Date: December 2009

Biometrics is a growing and important applications area receiving significant interest as a result of the criticality and the social impact of its applications. In addition, the increasing worldwide interest in security makes biometrics even more valuable and desirable, from many perspectives including its theory, technologies, design methodologies, and applications. The constituencies that may benefit from this ever growing field include academia, industry, government, and the general public.

To create a biometric system various issues need to be studied in a comprehensive and integrated way: from sensing to measurement procedures, from signal analysis and interpretation to quality assessment, from feature extraction to classification and analysis, from knowledge creation to extraction, and much more. Integration and cooperative combination are other key aspects of biometrics applications.

This special issue is focused on publishing original papers that address instrumentation and measurement aspects of the design, implementation and applications of biometrics. Guest Editors of this special issue are: Fabio Scotti, University of Milan, Italy; David Zhang, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong; Evangelia Micheli-Tzanakou, Rutgers University, USA.

Questions about the special issue should be directed to Dr. Fabio Scotti (fabio.scotti@unimi.it).

IEEE Systems Journal Special Issue on Biometrics Systems

Call for Papers: <http://www.dti.unimi.it/~piuri/pages/ISJ-SpecialIssueBiometricsSystemsCFP.pdf>

Proposal Due: January 15, 2009

Publication Date: August 2009

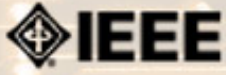
The increasing needs for security as well as medical diagnosis make biometrics more and more valuable world-wide, both

as theory, technologies, design methodologies, and applications are concerned. To create a biometric system various issues need to be studied in an integrated way: from sensing to measurement procedures, from signal analysis and interpretation to quality assessment, from feature extraction to classification and analysis, from knowledge creation to extraction, from algorithms to data structure, from computational complexity to system performance, from system engineering to software engineering, from privacy to social implications, and much more. Integration and cooperative combination are another key aspects of biometrics systems and applications.

This special issue is directed to collect original papers that address any aspect of the design, implementation and application of biometrics systems, by focusing on a system-level perspective. Guest Editors of this special issue are: Vincenzo Piuri, University of Milan, Italy; Jie Tian, Chinese Academy of Sciences, China; and Evangelia Micheli-Tzanakou, Rutgers University, USA.

Questions about the special issue should be directed to Prof. Vincenzo Piuri (vincenzo.piuri@unimi.it).

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Society News: AdCom News

AdCom Nominations

By Atsuko K. Yamazaki, Chair, Nominating Committee

The following people have been nominated for the Advisory Committee (AdCom).

- **Helen M. Grady**, Mercer University, U.S.A.
- **Thomas Orr**, University of Aizu, Japan
- **Julia M. Williams**, Rose-Human Institute of Technology, USA
- **George F. Hayhoe**, Mercer University, USA
- **Marie C. Parette**, Virginia Tech, USA
- **Sandy Bartell**, The Boeing Company, USA

Each of the candidates was asked to respond to a set of questions. Please review their statements on the PCS site on the **Nominations Page** and then vote for the three candidates you would like to represent you this year. Ballots are due via email to atsuko@sic.shibaura-it.ac.jp or via online voting by 15 September, 2008. **[Click here to vote online.](#)**

According to Society bylaws, each year, six AdCom member-at-large seats shall be filled by election as follows. Three seats shall be filled by election by current members of the Society in good standing from among the slate presented by the nominating committee. That election shall be conducted prior to the fall AdCom meeting in the manner prescribed by the nominating committee. The three candidates receiving the greatest number of votes in the balloting shall be declared elected. In case of a tie, the winner(s) shall be selected by lot from among the candidates receiving an equal number of votes.

The other three seats shall be filled by election by the current members-at-large of the AdCom from among the names remaining on the slate presented by the nominating committee. This election shall take place at the fall AdCom meeting. Only members-at-large are eligible to cast votes in the election of these three members-at-large.

Highlights of the Montreal AdCom Meeting

By Muriel Zimmerman, PCS Secretary

The IEEE Professional Communication Society Administrative Committee (AdCom) met on 13 July 2008 in Montreal. Sessions were held in a conference room at Concordia University, and PCS president Mark Haselkorn chaired the meeting.

The AdCom discussed a variety of topics, including new features on the redesigned website and upcoming conferences.

The PCS Website:

Our new website, built on a Drupal base, provides outstanding capacity for content management, publishing, and discussion. The AdCom acknowledges with gratitude the contributions of Brian Still and Sandy Bartell to the design and management of the site.

The podcasts are particularly popular, and requests have been received from university faculty members who wish to include the podcasts on class syllabi. With the leadership of PCS Transactions editor Jo Mackewicz , some authors of Transactions articles now create podcasts based on content of their published papers, and more such podcasts are planned.

Future Conferences

IPCC 2009 will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, 19-11 July 2009, at the Hilton Hawaii Village. The conference theme is *po'okela*, signifying a commitment to excellence in the communication of technical information. The Call for Papers is available as a .pdf attachment on the PCS website .

IPCC 2010 is scheduled for 7-9 July 2010, at the University of Twente campus in Enschede, The Netherlands. The conference theme is Communication in a World of Self-Service.

Plans for IPCC 2011 are in progress, and AdCom member Wally Lee is preparing a proposal for the conference to be held in Blacksburg, Virginia, at Virginia Tech.

Future AdCom Meetings

The AdCom has scheduled a virtual meeting for 26-27 September, 2008, and face-to-face meetings for 6-7 March 2009 in Terre Haute, Indiana, and 18-19 July 2009 in Honolulu, in conjunction with IPCC 2009. PCS members are always welcome to attend AdCom meetings.



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President's Column

by Mark Haselkorn

I am still basking in the glow of the Montreal conference and all the wonderful people I was able to interact with there. As always, the conference charged me with new ideas and new connections to help pursue those ideas. Yet even though our 2008 IPCC is barely over, I cannot help thinking ahead to the wonderful concept of gaining all these new ideas and meeting all these people in the setting of Hawaii! Put the 2009 IPCC on your calendar now: July 19 -22. I'll see you on the beach and we can discuss everything from virtual communities to user-centered design while we watch the sun set (or rise if you are an early person). I'm psyched.

Oh, and by the way, if you'd like to volunteer to help the Hawaii organizing committee, contact **Brenda Huettner** at bphuettner AT ieee DOT org.

Aloha.

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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Newsletter



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Editor's Column

Information Economy

by Kit Brown

We all know that information has value. It used to be that the people who held onto their information held the most power; today, it is more likely that those who share their information have the most power. And, information has become monetized. Who would have thought 30 years ago that someone could make a living just by sharing information on a blog or website? Yet, many people do so today.

Quantifying the value of information, however, is very difficult, and one needs only to look at the issues with intellectual property rights to see that the laws haven't kept up with the technology. Some would also argue that the ethical education of today's young people hasn't kept up either, according to **David Pogue**.

On the one hand, artists, musicians, writers, etc. need to feed their families and make money off their talents. On the other, is the expectation that information on the Internet is (should be) free.

The discussions and policies being developed around this issue have direct impact on not just the technical communication profession, but also the engineering profession as well. After all, it's not a large logical leap to start expecting design drawings to be available a la open source.

In fact, some architects, in a laudable effort to assist Hurricane Katrina victims, have posted their blueprints online for people to download for free. Their designs are intended to assist the victims in rebuilding their homes using inexpensive and readily available materials (**Architecture for Humanity** is one organization.)

This issue delves into the information economy and what it means to our lives.

Guest Editor

In July and the first week of August, I will be away for my wedding and honeymoon. Next month's issue will be guest edited by Brenda Huettner, owner of **P-N Designs**, Inc. and co-owner of **microwaves101.com**. A past member of PCS-Adcom, she was also one of my coauthors for *Managing Virtual Teams: Getting the Most from Wikis, Blogs, and Other Collaborative Tools*.

I know that Brenda will take great care of the July/August newsletter. To contact her, email her at **bphuettner AT ieee DOT org**.

I'll be back in September!



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 52, Number 7 • July/August 2008

PCS Publications News

Using the Web: IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication's Online Presence

by Jo Mackiewicz

Our IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication will be taking advantage of its website more often. First, authors are creating podcasts about their IEEE-TPC articles, including authors of articles published in the June issue of IEEE-TPC. This issue contains a special section on Darwinian Perspectives on Electronic Communication, which was guest-edited by Ned Kock of Texas A&M International University. Complementing the special section are two podcasts, which are available on the PCS website: <http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/>.

You can hear Alison Lenton (University of Edinburgh), talk about "Shopping for a Mate: Expected vs Experienced Preferences in Online Mating Choice," an article she wrote with Barbara Fasolo (London School of Economics and Political Science) and Peter Todd (Indiana University). You can also hear Gad Saad, a professor at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, talk about his co-authored article, "Online Hunting and Gathering: An Evolutionary Perspective on Sex Differences in Website preferences and Navigation." He and his co-authors' research examines sex differences in cognition and how they relate to online navigation and website preferences.

The idea behind the podcasts is to publicize and to expand the audience for authors' work.

Another web-related project relates to our IEEE-TPC regional editors initiative, which was started by Kirk St.Amant, our journal's associate editor for globalization. Under this initiative, a team of prominent scholars around the world solicits ideas and articles from a wider international audience. To help spread the word about the scholarship that appears in our journal, our regional editors have agreed to translate article abstracts from each issue from English into other languages. The translated abstracts will be posted to the journal's website. Our regional editor coordinator, Andrea Howland of Illinois Institute of Technology, is coordinating this effort, and the our journal's web editor, Brian Still, is working to make sure the orthographies of all of the languages appear correctly. Five regional editors worked on the June issue: Peter Kastberg (Denmark), Pavel Zemliansky (Ukraine), Diego Liberati (Italy), Tzouramanis Theodoros (Greece), and Ricardo Rejas (Spain). Three more regional editors (in Tunisia, Hungary, and France) have promised to start as regional editors with the September 2008 issue. Check out our regional editors' work: <http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/index.php?q=node/269>.

Jo Mackiewicz is the Editor-in-Chief of the Transactions on Professional Communication. You can reach her by email at

mackiewicz AT ieee DOT org.

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History

A. Stanley Higgins and the History of STC's Journal

BY ED MALONE

After twelve years under George Hayhoe's editorship, *Technical Communication*—the official journal of the Society for Technical Communication (STC)—has a new editor: Menno De Jong.[1] He is only the eighth editor in the journal's long history (see Table 1).



Figure 1:
Higgins in the mid-1960s
[35]

This changing of the guard invites a retrospection of STC's journal and one of its first editors, A. Stanley Higgins, with whom I have had the pleasure of corresponding by e-mail in recent months. He was also kind enough to send me extracts from an autobiography he wrote for his family.

Higgins served as editor of STC's journal from 1961 to 1976—a stint of 15 years. The 86-year-old wordsmith now lives in a retirement community in Florida. "I think I'm most proud of the fact that I kept the journal going," Higgins writes. "It was a second job so I spread it out over the full three-month period [for each issue]. Consequently I was constantly doing something on it. In those days the Society was small, its budget small, and the profession was just becoming known." [2]

The Greatest Generation

Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in August 1922, Arnold Stanley Higgins—known as Stan Higgins to his friends—was a member of that generation "who came of age during the Great Depression" and eventually helped to build "the most powerful peacetime economy in history." [3] Like many of his contemporaries, including those who founded the profession of technical communication, Higgins served overseas in the military during World War II, acquiring skills and experiences that altered the course of his life.

After his discharge from the army in 1946, Higgins returned to Cookeville, Tennessee, to resume his studies at

Tennessee Tech; however, he changed his major from journalism to electrical engineering to take advantage of his technical military training, which gave him "75 quarter-hours of credit." He continued to pursue his interest in journalism, however, by serving as editor of the college newspaper, the *Tech Oracle*. In 1947, the monthly was rated All-American by the Associated Collegiate Press for the first time in its history.[4]

An Editor in Oak Ridge

In 1948, Higgins went to work for the McGraw-Hill Book Company, which had a publishing contract with the Atomic Energy Commission in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. For the next seven years, he supervised a team of editors and participated in the preparation of the prestigious National Nuclear Energy Series—a collection of about 70 volumes "based on declassified reports of the Manhattan Project (the atomic bomb work)."[5]

As Higgins tells the story, McGraw-Hill executive Ross Kepler "had assembled a team of editors in New York, about ten or so, to come down to a 'desolate' (by their standards) little town in Tennessee. Mostly New Yorkers, this group was well educated and experienced in the book publishing field. The trouble was, they lacked supervision. Or so Kepler told my friend Bill Vaden, who had come from Tech a year earlier than I to head a larger department of composers and proofreaders for the AEC. Bill told him about me and when he said I had an engineering degree, Ross's interest became instantly apparent."[6]

Charter Member of TWE

During his Oak Ridge period, Higgins became involved in the movement to start a national professional organization for technical editors and writers. "My motivation was to get recognition for the professional work I was doing and the companies I worked for," he said. "McGraw-Hill was willing to send me to conferences...."[7] Those conferences were sponsored by the Association of Technical Writers and Editors (TWE), one of the groups that eventually became STC.

Although he did not attend the now-famous "Workshop on the Production and Use of Technical Reports," which was held in Washington D.C. in April 1953, Higgins did attend the next major gathering of the TWE founders - that is, at the convention of the American Documentation Institute in Washington in November 1953.[8] His name appears on a list of charter members that was created at that gathering.[9] "From then on," Higgins notes, "I was present at every conference of STC except the one in 1970." [10]

Associate Editor of TWE Journal

In 1955, Higgins left Oak Ridge for Cincinnati to become the supervisor of a publications group in the Flight Propulsion Laboratory of General Electric's Aircraft Gas Turbine Division.[11] Also in 1955, TWE began publishing a journal: the TWE Journal—one of the first journals specifically for technical writers and editors. In content, the first issue was little more than a newsletter, but it evolved quickly into a full-fledged journal.[12]

With the third issue, Higgins joined the staff as one of three associate editors, whose main responsibility was to screen manuscripts for publication.[13] Higgins worked first under Douglas E. Knight (editor of the Spring 1956 issue) and then Walter B. Dennen, Jr. (Fall 1956 issue)—the same Dennen, by the way, who later served as chairman of IEEE-GEWS (1964-1965) and edited the Group's newsletter from 1970 to 1971.[14], [15]

During a nine-month hiatus between the Fall 1956 and Summer 1957 issues, Allan Lytel became editor and moved the journal to Syracuse, where he worked for General Electric. All three associate editors including Higgins were replaced. Lytel must have preferred to have a local editorial team because two of the new associate editors, Claire Cox and Anne Gregory, also worked at G.E. in Syracuse.[16]

Assistant Editor of *STWE Review*

In Fall 1957, the New York-based TWE and the Boston-based STW—anticipating a merger—published a joint journal under the title *The Technical Writer*. The inside cover identified two editorial staffs: an STW group of five men and a TWE group of three men and three women. A disclaimer beneath the names stated, "Only this issue is a joint effort of the staffs of the two publications. Please address all correspondence to the The Editor, Allan Lytel,"[17] After the two organizations had officially merged to form the Society of Technical Writers and Editors, the journal became the *STWE Review*, with Lytel as its editor in chief.[18]

During this period, Lytel was very active in the Institute of Radio Engineers (IRE). In fact, he was a member of the group that, in Spring 1957, founded the IRE Professional Group on Engineering Writing and Speech (IRE-PGEWS), the predecessor of the IEEE Professional Communication Society.[19] Lytel used the *IRE Transactions* as a model for the *STWE Review*.

As Higgins recalls, "Our covers were the same—they simply listed the articles in the issue (like the Reader's Digest used to do)."[20]

When Lytel and the journal moved to Cincinnati in 1959, Higgins once again joined the staff, this time as Assistant Editor.[21] He remained in that position for the next two years, even after he left Cincinnati in 1960 to work at Westinghouse in Pittsburgh.[22] In that same year, *STWE* merged with the Los Angeles-based Technical Publishing Society to form the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers (STWP), and the *STWE Review* became the *STWP Review*.

The Friendly Undertaker

In November 1960, STWP president Vernon Root appointed an external review board to examine the organization's various publications, including its journal. The review board concluded that, "The present publication effort of the STWP ... seems too extensive for the Society at this stage of its existence. The Society is relatively young, its financial resources are limited, and the membership is not particularly large." [23] They recommended that the journal be discontinued in favor of a larger newsletter. This recommendation so incensed Lytel that he resigned on the spot.[24]

H.C. ("Mac") McDaniel, who was serving on the STWP Board of Directors at the time and who had helped Higgins find the job at Westinghouse, asked Higgins to step in as editor. "As Mac presented it, I was to be sort of a 'friendly undertaker' for the *Review*, charged with officiating over its final few issues. But to paraphrase Mark Twain, its demise was greatly exaggerated. Consequently, the friendly undertaker stayed on for 15 years." [25]

Thus began Higgins' long tenure as the journal's editor in chief—a tenure that was eclipsed only by that of his successor, Frank R. Smith, who edited the journal for 18 years—from 1976 to 1995. [26]

On Editing the Journal

In our correspondence, Higgins described his editorial routine during those early years of the journal:

"After I went over the submitted manuscripts that had been approved by the Board and marked them for the printer (typesize, etc.), they were picked up by Herbick and Held, one of Pittsburgh's largest printers. Within about a week I received galley proof of the copy. After I had proofed the pages and H&H had corrected them, I tackled the make-up phase.

"Where did I do this layout? On my living room floor, usually, where there was enough room to spread everything out. I had a chuckle when I read your 'Did the journal have an editorial office in Pittsburgh....What roles did the subeditors and editorial staff play?' The answer is none—all done by me in my house. Later on, I did have an Associate Editor and a couple of people who helped with the proofreading."

For his efforts, Higgins received a small stipend of \$1,500 per quarterly issue. Later, that amount increased to \$2,000 per issue.[27]

On the Quality of Scholarship

As soon as he became editor, Higgins appointed a three-person editorial board.[28] One member was Frank Smith with whom Higgins had already become close friends—in fact, "drinking buddies" at conferences.[29] Another was Herbert B. Michaelson, one of the founders of IRE PGEWS.[30] As Higgins recalls,

"[The Board's] principal job was to evaluate submitted articles, recommending acceptance or rejection, sometimes suggesting what the author needed to do to make the piece acceptable. I relied almost entirely on the Board's decision. Of course I wrote the rejection letters, but the Board supplied the reasons.

"Sometimes the Board suggested articles and subjects, but they were very hard to come by in the early days. There wasn't much out there, really. Our business was in its infancy stage.

"The quality of scholarship was quite low then, and we really had to scrape for qualified manuscripts. When I was editor—and also Frank did the same thing—my main job at the conferences was to button-hole every likely candidate for authorship. That was between sessions, at after-dinner gatherings in the rooms of vendors, and in the halls."[31]

Higgins saw the journal through several name changes—from the *STWP Review* to *Technical Communications* (with an "s" on the end) to *Technical Communication* (its present name). In 1976, after fifteen years as editor, he turned the reins over to his friend Frank Smith. Three years later (1979-1980), Higgins served as President of STC.[32]

Active in Church and Community

After his retirement from Westinghouse in 1987, Higgins moved to Florida to be close to his family. Since then, he has not done any contract work for industry; nor has he remained active in STC; instead, he has devoted his time and energy to church and community.

For example, every week he edits and lays out his Church's Sunday bulletin. He also edits the Church's 12-page monthly newsletter. From time to time, he even helps the rectors with their letters and publications.[33]

At the senior living community where he resides, he was recently elected to a two-year term as President of the Residents' Association. "My biggest contribution has been leading a drive called the Employee Recognition Fund. This year we collected \$25,000 from our residents to give a Christmas/Hanukah gift to each of the 100 nonmanagement employees." [34]

Note: In the next column, I hope to profile John M. Kinn, the first editor of the IRE-PGEWS's *Transactions* and newsletter.

Table 1: Journal Titles and Editors

Title	Editor(s)	Organization	Year(s)	Issue(s)
<i>Technical Writing Review</i>	publications committee	Society of Technical Writers (STW)	1954-1957	11
<i>TWE Journal</i>	Douglas E. Knight; Walter B. Dennen; Allan H. Lytel	Association of Technical Writers and Editors (TWE)	1955-1957	5
<i>Technical Communications</i>	Albert E. Tyler	Technical Publishing Society (TPS)	1957-1959	18
<i>The Technical Writer</i>	Allan H. Lytel	STW & TWE	1957	1
<i>STWE Review</i>	Allan H. Lytel	Society of Technical Writers and Editors (STWE)	1958-1960	10
<i>STWP Review</i>	Allan H. Lytel; A. Stanley Higgins	Society of Technical Writers and Publishers (STWP)	1960-1966	26
<i>Technical Communications</i>	A. Stanley Higgins	STWP	1967-1971	19
<i>Technical Communication</i>	A. Stanley Higgins; Frank R. Smith; Roger A. Grice; George F. Hayhoe; Menno D.T. de Jong	Society for Technical Communication (STC)	1971-Present	150

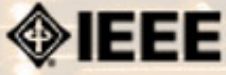
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- [3] Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (Random House, 1998), pp. xix, xx
- [4] A. Stanley Higgins, *Seventy Years of Working with Words*, unpublished autobiography, pp. 15-16

- [5] A. Stanley Higgins, *Seventy Years of Working with Words*, p. 18
- [6] A. Stanley Higgins, *Seventy Years of Working with Words*, p. 18; see also William M. Vaden, *The Oak Ridge Technical Information Center: A Trailblazer in Federal Documentation* (Oak Ridge: USDOE, 1992), p. 330
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- [12] Doug Knight, Irv Rosenbarker, and Joe Hiznay, eds., *TWE Journal*, Spring 1955
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- [15] Rudy Joenk, "The Newsletter Editors of PCS," *IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter*, Sept.-Oct. 1997, p. 6
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- [20] A. Stanley Higgins, e-mail to author, March 31, 2008
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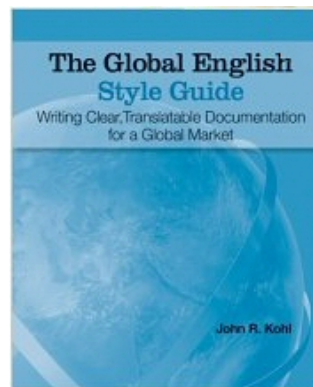


Book/Web Site Reviews

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](mailto:pcsnews.editor@ieee.org).

Global English: Now There's a Style Guide

By Kit Brown



Kohl, J. (2008) The Global English Style Guide: Translatable Documentation for a Global Market. Cary, North Carolina: SAS Institute, Inc.

At long last, someone has produced a style guide that facilitates writing for translation. John Kohl's excellent book is a must-have for any technical communicator whose writing might be translated into other languages.

The book is loaded with great examples of the good, the bad, and the truly atrocious ways of communicating technical information in English. For each example, John provides a simple explanation about why one version is preferred over another when writing for non-native English speakers, or when the work will be translated.

The book contains all the issues that I talk about in my workshops, and tells the reader how to solve them. While I didn't agree with every detail of his approach, this is an excellent and much needed reference book.

The book focuses on writing and syntax, but I also would have liked to see a chapter on formatting issues and one on graphics. For localization, these two areas can be just as problematic and costly as poor writing.

To buy the book, go to <http://www.amazon.com> and order it today. It's US\$28.76, and worth every cent/pence/ rupee/ shekel/rial.

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Tidbits

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

PERC Corpus of Professional English Unveiled

Contributed by Thomas Orr

Tokyo - On June 25, the Professional English Research Consortium (PERC), an academic society, began to offer a free online service, "PERC Corpus Online," for searching the PERC Corpus, the world's first and largest specialized database (corpus) of professional English in the area of science and technology. The service, with both English and Japanese interfaces, will be available for use at no charge until the end of June 2009. The service is operated by Tokyo-based NetAdvance Inc. The service is being provided as one part of the "Shogakukan Corpus Network" (www.corpora.jp) portal site, which also offers access to the British National Corpus (BNC), with 100 million words, and the Wordbanks English Corpus, with 56 million words. To access the PERC Corpus Online, please visit <http://www.corpora.jp/~perc04/index.html>.

PERC, a professional society, was established in 2002 by scholars in fields of linguistics and English language education, in cooperation with a group of publishing companies. The PERC Corpus, the largest published corpus in the field of science and technology, contains approximately 17 million words taken from papers published in leading journals in 22 fields including medicine, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, electronics, communications, and computer science[Read more.](#)

Melding Mind and Machine

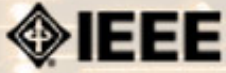
From IEEE *The Institute*, June 2008

Mind control is generally regarded as scary, conjuring up "The Manchurian Candidate" and other depictions of brainwashing. But recent refinements of brain-machine interfaces may redefine the expression to mean something totally different....[Read more.](#)

The Business Side of Social Networking

From *Entrepreneur Magazine*, July 2008

Entrepreneur magazine offers a list of ways to learn about and join social networking sites to promote a business. The tips cover blogging and using such sites as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Ning....[Read more.](#)



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 52, Number 7 • July/August 2008

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.

Media, Language, and Digital Writing

Position: Tenure track Assistant Professor
University: Department of Humanities at New Jersey Institute of Technology
Location: Newark, New Jersey, USA
Application Due: Open Until Filled
<https://njit.jobs/applicants/jsp/shared/frameset/Frameset.jsp?time=1205720331891>
To Apply: (posting #0600196)
Start Date: September 2008

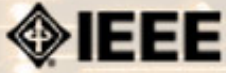
The Department of Humanities at New Jersey Institute of Technology (Newark, NJ) invites applications for a tenure-track position at the rank of assistant professor in media, language, and digital writing, to begin **September 2008**.

Applicants should have the following qualifications:

- Ph.D. or close to achieving that degree
- Evidence of scholarly accomplishment, creativity, and effective pedagogy
- Primary research field that focuses on, and participates in, developments in writing and human communication in the digital age, which can include developments in the visual arts.
- Preference will be given to technically skilled applicants who have worked in media production and design in a multidisciplinary environment that integrates arts, communication, and contemporary technologies, perhaps with special interest in digital literature.

Candidates will be expected to contribute fruitfully to the advancement of new initiatives in the teaching of writing, communication, formation and organization of expression on the Web in undergraduate and graduate programs. A

Review of applications will begin immediately and the position will remain open until filled. New Jersey Institute of Technology is an AA/EOE and especially encourages applications from women and members of minority groups.



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**.

Copyright Statement: "The Newsletter is copyrighted as a whole and does not require authors to transfer their copyright ownership to the IEEE. Permission to copy without fee all or part of any material without a copyright notice is granted, provided that the copies are not made or distributed for commercial advantage and the title of this publication and its date appear on each copy. To copy material with a copyright notice requires specific permission; direct inquiries or requests to the copyright holder as indicated in the article."

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](mailto: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.