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By Mike Unwalla

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I recently did an Internet search for "clear writing" and frequently came up with the same list of "10 principles of clear writing". Each one is a piece of very good advice; however the list has two faults...[Read more.](#)

- **History**

Dolly Dahle

"Never was there a field of writing so full of promises for the writer. The writers who respond to the demands of this fantastically big and incredibly rich field will not be writers who have to live in cold garrets and grimly starve for their art. They will be writers who loll beside warm swimming pools and..." [Read More.](#)

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Feature

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Potential clients come to me for help with their software user documentation. They have the implicit question, "How can a technical communicator help me in a cost-effective way?" If I successfully answer that question, my company is likely to gain a new client.

High-value goods and services are not impulse purchases. Both the purchaser and vendor may need to invest significant time in the purchasing process. When I first started working for myself, I wasted much time. Now I make the process as efficient as possible, both for myself, and for enquirers (I use the term 'enquirer' to mean 'potential client'). This article cover three broad areas:

- managing expectations
- defining the need (business case)
- producing the proposal

Managing expectations

Sometimes, enquirers do not know what they want or what to expect, so education is important. They know that their documentation needs to be improved, but usually, they have never used an external company before.

Early in the discussions, enquirers often ask about typical time scales and fees for projects. Until I have investigated their problems, I do not know (and they know that I cannot know). I tell them about previous projects, and that usually satisfies them. They have enough information to know whether they want to continue the discussion.

Enquirers sometimes have unrealistic expectations of what consultants can do. They think that if they provide source material, I can convert that into user documentation. In feedback from clients, a common comment is, "we didn't realise how much effort would be required on our part." That occurs despite telling them that they will need to make a significant investment of time.

Some enquirers do not understand the real value that technical communicators (technical writers) bring to a company. They focus on skills such as language ability, editing, and ability to use software tools. Certainly, those skills are important. However, the real value that technical writers bring is in the ability to gather information from disparate sources, clarify conflicts and ambiguities, and then present the information to readers in a clear manner. To help enquirers to see this, the TechScribe website contains many articles and case studies that explain the issues.

Occasionally, enquirers are not sure whether to employ a technical communicator or use the services of a freelance. My

company's niche is helping software companies that do not have enough work to employ a full-time technical communicator. For long projects, I direct people to recruitment agencies that specialise in finding technical communication professionals.

The Business Case: Defining the Need

What is the enquirer's need for the documentation? What problems will it solve? Is documentation the best solution? What is the cost to the company of not having documentation? If no business case exists, the project will not start.

In the past, I wasted much time on potential documentation projects. In my naivety, I would spend two or three days investigating software and the existing documentation. Then I would discover that the enquirer had no real need, or did not have authority to spend, or was just testing the market to see what was available.

Therefore, early in the process, the enquirer completes a business requirements checklist. That helps to establish the needs of the company. Only the enquirer can do the numbers to make the business case, but I can help the enquirer to become clear about objectives. If the likely cost of designing documentation is greater than (or even the same as) not having documentation, no business case exists.

The enquirer, or someone else in the company, completes a documentation requirements checklist. That gives me an overview of the enquirer's vision of the documentation, the users (the audience), and the software. Getting to the core of the enquirer's problem is essential.

The two checklists are the starting point for more discussion. When the real issues are clear, and the constraints within which a solution must exist are defined, I can suggest solutions that will work for the enquirer.

At this stage, I know that the enquirer has the money, the authority, and the need. Based on the information supplied by the enquirer, I give an estimate (one metric that I use is the number of unique screens, tabs, and dialogs in the software). If the estimate is acceptable to the client, I visit the enquirer for detailed discussions, to learn more about the software, and to meet people who will be involved in the project.

Producing the proposal

After the site visit, I produce a proposal. This reflects back to the enquirer the information that I gathered about their problems, their software, and the people who use the software. One section deals with the deliverables. (The proposal also deals with time scales, the fee, the validity period, and terms & conditions. For more information, see www.techscribe.co.uk/ta/HowToWriteATender.pdf.)

You may wonder how it is possible to specify deliverables at this stage. I still do not have a deep understanding of the software, and I do not know how big it is (although enquirers supplied a number in the documentation requirements checklist, the number is often an estimate). Therefore, it would be foolish to state what I will produce and to offer to do this for a fixed fee. However, the enquirer naturally wants to receive a firm quote.

To resolve this conflict, the first deliverable is a documentation plan (project plan), for which I charge a fixed fee. I investigate the problem in detail and scope the project. The documentation plan will include the draft structure for each document that I intend to produce. I also provide a fixed-price quote to produce the documentation that is specified in the

documentation plan. The enquirer (now a client) is not tied to using my company to produce the documentation, and is free to take the documentation plan to another provider (of course, that is extremely unlikely to happen).

For detail about the process, and to read the checklists, see www.techscribe.co.uk/techw/purchasing-process.htm.

In summary, to produce a proposal that has a good chance of being accepted, and to avoid wasting both my time and the time of an enquirer, I do the following:

- Educate the enquirer about what I can do and what I cannot (or will not) do.
- Understand the true needs of a company and help an enquirer to define a business case for documentation.

About the author

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Feature

How to Prepare A Winning Book Proposal

By John Hedtke

Preparing a winning book proposal is very similar to bidding on many other freelance documentation projects. This article will show you how to create a book proposal that will give you the best chance of selling your book idea to the publisher you want.

A book proposal is more than an outline and a schedule. A well-written proposal is a package of material that not only communicates how you intend to do the project, but also demonstrates your writing and organizational abilities. Moreover, a good proposal tells a prospective publisher that you have carefully planned all aspects of the book and that you're ready to hit the ground running as soon as the book's approved. And, if you are one of several authors being considered for a specific project, presenting a solid, well-considered proposal can frequently be the deciding factor in getting the contract.

There are four parts to a book proposal:

- Cover letter
- Résumé
- Writing samples
- Documentation plan

Cover Letter

In general, publishers prefer to work with people by mail when they first meet them, as it will probably save time in the long run for everybody. (By the way, unless you know an acquisitions editor from previous experience, just send your proposal to the Acquisitions department at the publisher. They'll make sure it gets routed to the appropriate editor.) Once you have a bibliography, you'll be able to approach publishers directly, but it's better to start by mail. As such, you'll need to start your book proposal with a cover letter that introduces you to the publisher, pitches a brief idea of the book you want to do, and sells the publisher on your ability to complete the project in a timely fashion.

The plan (discussed later) will give a detailed explanation of the book, but you need to come up with a brief statement of what the book is about. For example, all of these are probably adequate to get the editor to read more of your proposal if they have a niche for your book:

- This book will introduce the reader to the undocumented features of Windows XP. It will have a conversational style aimed at the intermediate user, with graduated steps to increase their skill level so that they're able to take advantage of the more powerful undocumented features.
- This book will teach gardeners how to identify useful weeds and wild plants, and cultivate them as companion plants,

or food and ornamentation crops. There will be a reference section in the latter half of the book with line drawings of many of the more common useful wild plants in North America.

- This book will be a tutorial on how to program using the new Adobe AIR language, with an emphasis on beginning programmers who are learning this as their first or second programming language. The book will contain extensive examples and exercises, and will have a diskette of sample code and AIR development tools in the back of the book.
- This book will be aimed at intermediate to advanced quilters who want to create their own patterns for their programmable sewing machines. The book will give a brief description of the general features currently available in programmable sewing machines and what to look for if you don't already have one. It will then discuss how to create effective designs and how to avoid the eight common mistakes made when transferring a paper design to a programmable sewing machine. There will be a special section on creating very large designs and quilting patterns for programmable long-arm sewing machines.

Make sure that your idea is right for the publisher. You can't sell books on computers to a publisher specializing in books on sailing... but you might sell a book that tells how to use computers when building wooden boats. Having an angle like this is often the best way to bridge the gap into a field of writing in which you have no direct experience.

Radiate your enthusiasm for the project. Refer to the writing samples and the résumé items that show your depth of knowledge for this particular topic. Mention anything you've written on this subject before (and include it in your samples if at all possible). It's not enough to show the publisher that you have a good idea; you need them to know that you are the most qualified person to write this book.

Most importantly, you need to sell the publisher on your ability to meet your deadlines. Because of the topical nature of book publishing these days, it is extremely important for computer book publishers to get books out quickly. The time between getting an idea approved and seeing the book on the streets should be no more than 6 to 7 months. Allowing 2 to 3 months for final editing, indexing, production, and printing, you'll need to write the book in 3 to 4 months. Fast work is 4 months from idea to street; really fast work is 3 months. Conversely, a slow book is one that takes 9 months or more. Large reference works may take this long, but the amount of time should be carefully documented and justified in the schedule.

It's worth noting that publishers of other types of non-fiction books—cooking, travel, do-it-yourself, and so on—will have differing and probably more generous schedules than the computer book industry, but all publishers are speeding up their publishing cycles to be the first on the market. Any publisher will be impressed by your ability to turn out a book quickly. Nobody ever seems to complain about work done ahead of schedule.

Résumé

Include a copy of your résumé. You may want to tailor the résumé to underscore skills and accomplishments relating to the book. For example, if you are pitching a book on using a particular graphics package and have a background or education in design, make sure that this is featured prominently in your résumé. Also make sure that relevant skills and experience are mentioned on the first page of the cover letter.

Writing Samples

Your writing samples should demonstrate your abilities as a technical writer in general, and, if possible, your ability to write on the subject you're proposing. It's not necessary to send a copy of a complete manual to a publisher (they're probably prefer that you don't, as a matter of fact). As with a job interview, give them photocopies of a chapter or relevant

section and offer to send them the entire manual if they want to take a more detailed look.

One of the most obvious writing samples to include may be a sample chapter from the book you want to publish. Although it's usually a bad idea to write the entire book before you have a contract (particularly in the computer book field), a sample chapter will give the publisher an exact gauge of your ability to write well on your chosen topic.

Include sample screen shots, rough drafts of conceptual artwork, and appropriate references to other chapters in the book. (Be sure to put your copyright notice clearly on the bottom of each page. Accidents do happen occasionally.)

Finally, don't make the publisher return copies of anything to you! Publishers are up to their collective eyebrows in submitted material of various kinds (this bunch of stuff is known affectionately in the industry as "the slushpile") and they don't need the hassle of returning anything. Assume that anything you send to them will not be returned; marking copies in red ink on the front page with "May be discarded after review" or some such will make it even easier.

Documentation Plan

A documentation plan is a useful and necessary project management tool before, during, and after a project. It presents information about the book's scope, purpose, target audience, and goals, the book's market niche, the standards and styles the book should adhere to, staffing requirements, the delivery schedule, and a detailed outline.

At the beginning, the documentation plan gives detailed information about the project to the publisher so they can make an informed choice about whether or not they want to publish the book. Once your idea has been approved, the plan serves to further clarify your and the publisher's concept of the project. By writing down and agreeing to the scope and purpose, the goals for the book, and the schedule, you eliminate most of the causes of friction between you and the project editor.

During a project, a documentation plan is an effective scheduling and tracking tool. With each of the sections identified, you can gauge your progress compared to your original estimates. This information is helpful for avoiding writing crunches near the end of a project. With the schedule and outline information, you can also use the documentation plan as a tool for delegating sections of a project to subcontractors or other authors on the book.

Finally, the plan serves as a reminder of the scope, purpose, and goals of a book, a standard against which you can check your work. A documentation plan is essential for a post-project analysis. You can check your original assumptions and statements of the project against the finished product.

By comparing your actual schedule against your estimates, you can pinpoint problems to avoid or plan for in the next project. This information is extremely valuable, as over the course of several books, you will learn how to estimate your time in each phase of a project very accurately. This can result in tighter bids and schedules, which in turn can help you get more contracts.

There are six basic sections of a typical documentation plan:

- Overview
- Marketing
- Production information
- Staffing requirements

- Schedule
- Outline

Each of these sections addresses a specific topic:

The **overview** section states the scope and purpose of the project, defines the audience, gives the relationship to any other projects, and identifies the responsibilities of you and the publisher. It also identifies the general details for the handoff of the finished product (how many copies and in what general form). What you put in the overview is not a binding legal description, unless the information is included by reference in the actual publisher's contract (some publishers may want to do this), but it will serve to spell out a lot of details that might otherwise get lost or misinterpreted.

The **marketing** section identifies ways in which the book can be marketed. (Most publishers don't expect authors to lift a finger to help them market, so showing that you're able and willing to supply marketing opportunities may impress them.) Be sure that you can also point to the competition in the field—no publisher wants to walk into a heavily populated field without warning—and how and why this book will beat all of them. Also mention if there are opportunities for co-marketing or bundling with the product. Dan Gookin's classic book *DOS for Dummies* was already a bestseller even before Microsoft bundled it with their MS-DOS 6.2 release; there are now millions of copies in print. Riding on a product's coattails will help you, and can frequently help the product, too. Don't be afraid to aim high with your marketing ideas.

The **production information** section discusses what the finished product will look like, and how you intend to get there. What style will be used for the book? What format and page size? Art requirements? Some of this will be dictated by the publisher, but you should be able to estimate the number of pages and the type and approximate quantity of illustrations your book will have. You'll probably also have an idea of what the book should look like overall, so mention this in the proposal.

The **staffing** section discusses who will be doing the reviews and which kind. It also identifies the technical editor (usually a reviewer with background in the field you're writing about), illustrator, proofreader, indexer, and other related personnel. At the beginning of a project, most of these are likely to be unknown.

The **schedule** section lists the proposed schedule along with any assumptions about the schedule. Be as specific as possible. Budget for vacations, holidays, and life requirements (such as doing taxes, birthdays, and so on). Leave yourself as much room as you can near the end of the book to make up time—there's never enough time.

Finally, the **outline** section presents an in-depth outline of the book. A detailed outline is a requirement for a good book proposal! The editor will be able to clearly identify the focus of your book and offer specific suggestions before you begin writing on how to change or improve the book to better fit the publisher's marketing plans.

By the way, a documentation plan is best when it's a living document. As a project progresses, you should make changes to the plan to reflect changes in staffing, schedule, or (most importantly) the outline. Whenever you make a material change, you should also send a copy of the revised documentation plan to your editor so they're up to date as well.

Summary

You can occasionally get a contract by coming up with a killer idea, phoning a publisher, pitching the idea over the phone, and hitting the jackpot... but you'll stand a much better chance of getting the contract you want with the right publisher by

making a planned presentation.

Remember that you're selling your idea and your abilities as an author to the publisher, so it's important for your proposal to shine. Publishers respond best to an idea if they can see that you're excited about it, there's a marketing niche, and that you know what to do to bring the book to fruition. If you think of your complete book proposal as a job interview by mail, you won't be far wrong. Make sure the proposal is dressed well and looks good when it first meets the publisher.

John Hedtke is the award-winning author of 25 books and is a Fellow of the STC. He runs JVH Communications (www.hedtke.com), a company that provides writing, consulting, and training services to private and government clients in all fields. John requests that anyone who gets a book contract because of this article remembers him in the acknowledgments and send him a copy of the book. Reprinted with permission. Copyright 1992, 2008, John Hedtke.

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History

Dolly Dahle and the Business of Technical Communication

by Ed Malone

In *Go Write, Young Man* (1961), later revised and republished as *Billions for Confusion* (1963), Malden Grange Bishop describes the technical writing profession in Southern California in the 1950s:

"Never was there a field of writing so full of promises for the writer. The writers who respond to the demands of this fantastically big and incredibly rich field will not be writers who have to live in cold garrets and grimly starve for their art. They will be writers who loll beside warm swimming pools and dip dainty crackers into crystal dishes of caviar. These writers will not be driven from their attics by screaming landladies demanding their rent. They are more apt to be driven to their country clubs by bowing chauffeurs." [1]

Bishop's description may seem like humorous hyperbole, but it is borne out to some extent by the remarkable success of a woman named Dorothy "Dolly" Dahle (See Figure 1). In 1955, Dahle started a technical typing business with a \$600 loan, a desk, a typewriter, and a telephone. [2] By 1962, her company was reportedly grossing \$500,000 a year. [3]



Figure 1: Dolly Dahle [5]

From Orphan to "Big Bruiser"

Dolly was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1925. [2] During the Great Depression, she had to spend seven years in an orphanage because of "a broken home." [4] When she was 15, she left the orphanage and went to work for Packard Motors in Detroit. Somehow, she managed to complete her high school education in the evenings while holding down a full-time day job. [5] During this period, she also learned to do the hula, which she performed at USO shows. [4]

Her life took an unexpected turn when she entered a talent contest sponsored by New York nightclub owner Billy Rose, who was trolling the country for new talent. The winner of the contest was supposed to be the person who received the most applause. "I got plenty of whistles," Dahle said, "but not the most applause." Nevertheless, Rose offered her a job, and she moved to New York City, where she performed the hula at the famous Diamond Horseshoe Club. Just one inch short of six feet, Dahle belonged to a group of women that Rose called his "Big Bruisers." [4]

After spending a year in New York City, Dahle and two friends moved to Southern California, hoping to find work in the movie business. [5] For a short time, Dahle worked as a showgirl at Earl Carroll's nightclub in Hollywood. [4] Later, she worked as a fashion model, a bookkeeper, a stenographer, and a bank clerk. A brief marriage in the late 1940s ended in divorce. [5]

Not Just a Typing Business

In 1950, Dahle took a job as a proofreader at North American Aviation. From there, she advanced quickly in the technical communication field, becoming a production supervisor at H. L. Yoh Engineering and then a production manager for Catalogue and Advertising Producers. [4]

With this experience behind her, the 30-year-old Dahle decided to start her own business in Los Angeles—a company called Publishing Production Service (PPS). [2] The company's specialization was "Reproducible Typing to Government Specifications," including the following kinds of typing:

- vellum
- justified copy
- tabular
- volume
- statistical
- direct plates [6]

By 1959, the company had expanded its repertoire to include much more than typing:

- proofreading
- editing
- photographs
- copy research
- cartoons
- cold-set type
- page make-up [7] (See Figure 2)

WE'VE
EXPANDED

editing cartoons
justified type **again!!** cold-set type
photographs proofreading
copy research page make-up
pick-up and delivery distribution

FOR —
COMPANY MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

S E R V I C E , INC.

Call Dick Balos -
Hollywood 4-8161
for information

725 NORTH WESTERN AVENUE
LOS ANGELES 29, CALIFORNIA

Figure 2: Display Ad [7]

In its first year (1955), PPS grossed a mere \$1,500 and netted only \$18. But those figures increased sharply over the next six years. By 1961, PPS was taking in about \$250,000 annually and had more than a dozen special typewriters, worth \$800 each, and about 40 employees.[2] "Every time the Russians or Americans orbit another rocket," Dahle said, "I get more business, because everyone has a better idea to suggest and the proposals have to be rushed into print." [3]

The PPS staff did production work on technical manuals, classified reports, government contract proposals, and house magazines for clients, such as Hughes Aircraft, Convair, North American, Douglas, and Lockheed.[4] In one interview, Dahle credited her employees for her company's success: "Most of the girls I hire are Japanese. They seem to be very well suited because their work is so exacting and neat.... They are able to go to college by working for me." [2]

A Woman in the Early Profession

Dahle was often the object of jokes and gossip in the media. There were puns on her name ("Doll"), the type of work she did ("Publisher of House Organs"), and especially her height ("Towering Aspirations").[4],[8] At times, she seemed to encourage this humor and even participate in it. "I found that being a woman can be a detriment rather than a help in selling," she said. "For example, one person thought I was trying to sell sex." But then she added that her company was now "his sole vendor for *reproduction typing*" (italics added). In the same interview, she discusses her body measurements in some detail.[2]

A man who worked as a technical writer in Southern California in the 1950s and 1960s recalled that Dahle "was always accompanied by her attorney" at client meetings.[9] Most of her clients and colleagues had never met a woman with such power and money. As one reporter commented, "The beautiful and unmarried Miss Dahle (rhymes with mail) is quite a contrast to the public's image of the obese business executive with a copy of the *Wall Street Journal* in one hand and a fork in the other." [4] Attempts to explain her success often resulted in wild speculation: "There was some speculation (never

proven) that there was Las Vegas (Mafia) money behind the business." [9]

In the early technical writing profession, businesses such as PPS were usually run by men. PPS was an exception, but it was not the only one. In Chicago, for example, Rosalie Kohn and Ernestine Kohn started Rosern Publishing and Procedures in 1955 and operated it successfully for many years. [10] A woman did not have to have Mafia backing to succeed in the business during this era, but she did need to have some experience in the field, a keen business sense, and a thick skin.

Active in TPS and STWP

As many of you probably know, the Society for Technical Communication used to be the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers (STWP), which was created when the L.A.-based Technical Publishing Society (TPS) merged with the Ohio-based Society of Technical Writers and Editors in 1960. [11]

Dahle was an active member of both TPS and STWP. In 1958, she chaired a panel on printing and reproduction at TPS's 4th annual convention in L.A. The only other woman on the convention program was Rachael Hofsaes, an employee of the Houston-Fearless Corporation, who had the responsibility of entertaining the wives and children of the men who were attending the convention. [12] On January 26, 1959, Dahle was elected second vice president of TPS and presumably served in that capacity until the merger with STWP. [13]

The merger of TPS and STWE must have had a cooling effect on the L.A. chapter because its membership declined. [14] Dahle remained active, however, serving as chapter secretary from 1961 to 1963. [9] She was succeeded by Helen G. Caird, who later served as chapter president (1965-1966) and eventually president of STC (1972-1973). According to Caird, Dahle "WAS the Los Angeles Chapter of the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers" in the early 1960s. [14]

Request for Information

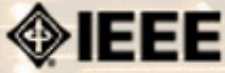
PPS was located first at 6009 W. 3rd St. and later at 725 N. Western Ave. in Los Angeles, California. [6],[7] Dahle owned a house near Silver Lake in East Hollywood and a ski lodge on Mammoth Mountain in east-central California [2],[4] She seems to have disappeared from the newspapers and organizational publications after 1963. Perhaps she married and changed her name. I would be interested in interviewing anyone who knew Dahle or worked at Publishing Production Service in the 1950s or 1960s.

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Writing Tips

Fixing the Flaws in the 10 Principles of Clear Writing

By Philip Yaffe

I recently did an Internet search for "clear writing" and frequently came up with the same list of "10 principles of clear writing". Each one is a piece of very good advice; however the list has two faults.

First, I am viscerally suspicious of all 10-item lists. They seem contrived. It's as if the writer decided that any self-respecting list should have 10 items, then set about inventing them to meet the challenge.

More importantly, these 10 principles of clear writing are not really principles at all, but rather tips and technique.

What's the difference? Tips and techniques tell you what to do; principles tell you why you are doing it.

Understanding why you are doing something, i.e., the benefit you will gain, helps ensure that you will actually do it and do it consistently. Too often, when we are told only what to do, we follow the instruction half-heartedly, inconsistently, or not at all.

For example, my last year at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), I tutored writing to make a bit of much-needed cash. One day, a first-year student came to me with a note from a professor, saying: "Young lady, I advise you either to leave my class immediately or prepare to fail it." I concluded that she was misapplying a fundamental writing principle, so I explained it to her and had her do a few simple exercises to be certain she understood it. By the end of term, her almost certain "F" had shot up to a gratifying "B".

This was not an isolated case. When students were having writing difficulties, it was generally because of one of the following things:

- unfamiliar with a fundamental principle
- inconsistently applying it
- improperly applying it
- not applying it at all.

I am a marketing communication consultant, after having been a newspaper editor, a writer with *The Wall Street Journal*, and European marketing communication director for two major international companies. Over my 40-year career, I have been continually appalled by how poorly top business executives, academics, researchers, and other clearly intelligent people express themselves, both in writing and speaking.

Some years ago, I tried to analyze this depressing phenomenon. As a result, I defined three key principles that underlie

virtually every kind of expository (non-fiction) writing and speaking. To give them strength and substance, I cast them in the form of quasi-mathematical formula. As formulae, these principles not only tell you what to do, they also tell you why you are doing it and how to go about it.

I would first like to briefly explain these three principles, then see how they coincide with lists of tips and techniques that masquerade as principles.

Most people accept that a good text should be "clear" and "concise". There is a third principle that is seldom mentioned. A good text should also be "dense".

Clarity Principle

Being clear is not a matter of personal appreciation. Do you find your text clear? You should; after all, you wrote it. But how can you be certain that it will be clear to others?

According to the clarity principle, to be clear you must do three things:

1. Emphasize what is of key importance.
2. De-emphasize what is of secondary importance.
3. Eliminate what is of no importance.

In short: $Cl = EDE$

If you follow the formula, before you start writing, you must first determine what is of key importance, i.e., what are the key ideas you want your readers to take away from your text?

This is not always easy to do. It is far simpler to say that everything is of key importance, so you put in everything you have. However, unless you do the work of defining what you really want your readers to know, they won't do it for you. They will simply get lost in your text and either give up, or come out the other end not knowing what they have read.

Next, as you write your text, you must be certain to de-emphasize what is of secondary importance. Why? Because if you really want your readers to recognize and retain the key ideas, then you don't want them getting lost in the details. Details (information of secondary importance) explain and support the key ideas. They must never overwhelm them.

Finally, you must ruthlessly eliminate what is of no importance. Why? Because any information that adds nothing to explaining and supporting the key ideas will tend to obscure them, which is exactly the opposite of what you want.

Conciseness Principle

According to the conciseness principle, your text should be as long as necessary and as short as possible.

In symbols: $Co = LS$

"As long as necessary" means covering all the key ideas you identified under "clarity", and all the information of secondary importance needed to explain and support them. Note that nothing is said here about the number of words, because it is

irrelevant. If it takes 500 words to be "as long as necessary", then 500 words must be used. If it takes 1500 words, then this is all right, too.

"As short as possible" means staying as close as you can to the minimum. Not because people prefer short texts; in the abstract the terms "long" and "short" have no meaning (so-called "weasel words"). The important point is: All words beyond the minimum tend to damage clarity. Subconsciously, readers will continually be trying to understand why those words are there, and will be continually failing because they serve no purpose.

Density Principle

Density is a less familiar concept than clarity and conciseness, but is equally important. According to the density principle, you text should contain the following:

1. Precise information
2. Logically linked

In other words: $D = PL$

Using precise information rather than wishy-washy weasel words in a text aids clarity. For example, if you say it is a "hot" day, what do you mean? One reader might interpret hot as 24° C while another might interpret it as 36°C. However, if you say the temperature outside is 28°C, there is no room for interpretation—or misinterpretation.

Using precise information also generates confidence, because it tells the reader that you really know what you are talking about. This helps to hold the reader's attention and makes it easier to get your points across.

However, precise data (facts) by themselves are insufficient. To be meaningful, data must be organized to create "information". There are two important tests to apply when converting data into information.

A. Relevance

Is a particular piece of data really needed? As we have seen, unnecessary data damages clarity and ultimately confidence. Therefore, any data that do not either aid understanding or promote confidence should be rigorously eliminated.

B. Misconceptions

The logical link between data must be made explicit to prevent the reader from coming to false conclusions. Example: A singular occurrence may be misinterpreted as part of a broad pattern; a general policy may be misinterpreted as applying only in specific circumstances, etc.

To ensure that a logical link is clear, place the two pieces of data as close to each other as possible, preferably right next to each other. When data are widely separated, their logical link is masked. If you don't make the logical connection, it is unrealistic to expect readers will do so for themselves.

Keeping these true principles - clarity, conciseness, density - firmly in mind allows us to re-evaluate the oft-quoted ten "principles" of clear writing" (i.e., tips and techniques), thereby making them significantly more meaningful, and

significantly more useful.

1. Keep sentences short

This is usually interpreted to mean an average sentence length of 15 - 18 words. Not because readers can't handle longer sentences. However, when length rises above this average, sentences are likely to be poorly constructed, thereby damaging clarity.

But remember, 15 - 18 words is an average. Don't shun longer sentences. A well-constructed long sentence is often clearer than two or more shorter ones. Why? Because the longer sentence better shows the logical linkage among the various elements, which would be lost by splitting it apart.

2. Prefer the simple to the complex

If the precise word is long, don't hesitate to use it, because not using it would damage clarity. On the other hand, if a shorter word would do just as well, prefer it. Examples: "dog" rather than "canine", "change" rather than "modification", "entrance" rather than "ingress", etc.

3. Prefer the familiar word

This is just a variation of point 2. If you have a choice between two words, use the one that most people are likely to recognize and use themselves. Examples: "insult" rather than "imprecate", "daily" rather than "quotidian".

4. Avoid unnecessary words

In other words, be concise.

5. Use active verbs

In an individual sentence, whether you use an active or a passive verb is of little consequence. However, over an entire text it becomes very important. Active verbs tend to enhance clarity; conversely, too many passive verbs tend to damage it.

6. Write the way you speak

This is a very useful technique, but don't take it literally. When we speak, we generally use simpler vocabulary and sentence structures than when we write. Writing the way you speak is a good way to produce a first draft. However, when we speak, our sentence structures are often confused and our vocabulary imprecise. These faults must be rigorously corrected in the second, third or later drafts.

7. Use terms your reader can picture

In other words, be dense. Use specifics; avoid weasel words. When making a general statement, be certain to support it with concrete data.

8. Tie in with your reader's experience

We are again talking about density, i.e., using precise information. Be certain that the terminology you choose is compatible with your readers' experience. If you need to use a word not likely to be familiar to your readers, define it the first time it appears. If it is really key, define it again later on in the text. Also be wary of words that look familiar but have a very different meaning in the context of your subject.

Example: "Insult" is medical jargon for an injury or trauma. However, talking about an "insult" to the heart without first explaining this unconventional meaning of the word is likely to leave your readers scratching their heads.

9. Make full use of variety

This suggestion is almost superfluous. If you conscientiously apply the three writing principles of clarity, conciseness, and density, you will almost automatically introduce variety of sentence length and structure into your text.

However, avoid introducing too much variety of vocabulary. Constantly changing terminology for the sake of variety damages clarity. If several words mean essentially the same thing, pick one or two of them and shun the others. Introduce equivalent terms in such a way that the reader clearly understands they mean the same thing.

Example

(Confusing) Manned space travel to Mars is once again being considered. The Red Planet has fascinated mankind for centuries. The "God of War" is the fourth planet from the sun - our own Earth is the third - and it is our closest celestial neighbor except for the moon.

(Clear) Manned space travel to Mars is once again being considered. Popularly known as the "Red Planet", Mars has fascinated mankind for centuries. Being the fourth planet from the sun (Earth is the third), it is our closest celestial neighbor, except for the moon.

10. Write to express, not to impress

The purpose of expository (non-fiction) writing is to inform or instruct, not to show off your literary prowess. The fact is, the better you write, the less people are likely to notice. And, this is how it should be. The reader's full attention should be on what you are saying, not how you are saying it.

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



Professor Grammar

Atrophy of the Apostrophe

By Professor Grammar

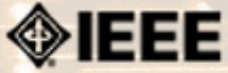
Many lessons ago, the Professor shared with you some tips on possessives of inanimate objects. The Professor warned not to add to the proliferation of apostrophes before the letter s. After musing over her advice for a while (which, of course, was quite accurate), the Professor decided to revisit the topic to point out another occasion when the apostrophe-s is incorrect: when using the possessive form of it.

The use of *its* and *it's* often leads to puzzlement among both writers and lay people. Oh, to wit, the Professor has seen lately, on numerous occasions, incorrect usage of the contraction *it's*. The Professor yearns to yell from the top of the Himalayas that an apostrophe is necessary only when you want to say *it is*. In fact, it's funny how such a little word can cause so much confusion in its usage.

Now because this is a quick lesson, we're ready for a quick quiz: read the last sentence of the previous paragraph and substitute it is for its. Is the sentence still grammatically correct? Of course not, because its is being used as a possessive adjective for the noun usage. Now, apply the test again to the same sentence, this time substituting *it is* for *it's*. Does the sentence make sense? If the answer is yes, you've just mastered the simple test that will help you forever avoid making a very avoidable error.

Remember, the contraction *it's* needs an apostrophe; the possessive *its* does not.

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.



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 52, Number 3 • March 2008

President's Column

AdCom Meeting This Month

By Mark Haselkorn

Mark's column will return next month.

***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



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 52, Number 3 • March 2008

Editor's Column

Proposals

by Kit brown

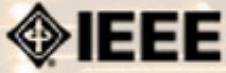
Proposals are both the bane and lifeblood of consulting. We use them to obtain new work, but often must put in ridiculous hours to get them out in time to meet the client's deadline.

The two features this month talk about different types of proposals--book and business ones.

In addition, Professor Grammar is back with a discussion of apostrophes, Phillip Yaffe contributes to the writing best practices top 10 lists, and Ed Malone shares the fascinating history of Dolly Dahle, one of the early technical communication mavens.

Enjoy!

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Newsletter



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Book/Web Site Reviews

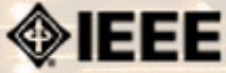
Editor's Note: Several IEEE members have written books of interest to PCS members. If you would like to have it reviewed by a newsletter volunteer, please contact Kit Brown at [pcsnews.editor AT ieee.org](mailto:pcsnews.editor@ieee.org).

Proposal Books

Some books that might help you with writing a proposal:

- ***How to Write a Book Proposal*** (ISBN 1-58297-251-6) : Michael Larsen walks you through the process of submitting a book proposal to a publisher from the beginning. The book is organized like the proposal, with the chapters mirroring each section of the proposal. Several appendices provide checklists, resources, and example proposals.
- ***Persuasive Business Proposals*** (ISBN 0-8144-5100-4): Tom Sant gives great ideas for automating the process for developing large proposals, while making potential clients feel that the proposal was tailor-made for them. He also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the proposal focuses on correctly identifying and solving the client's problem, rather than on showcasing your client list and marketing propaganda.

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Tidbits

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

Boosting teamwork with wikis

from *Fortune Small Business*, February 12, 2008

"FORTUNE Small Business) -- Egged on by his colleagues, Ben Sutton snatched \$1,000 from his company's safe late last year. It was no heist, but the culmination of a fierce competition at Rosen Law, a firm that specializes in divorce cases in Raleigh. In an effort to get his employees to collaborate more effectively, owner and chief executive Lee Rosen had decided to put his entire operation on a wiki - with a \$1,000 cash prize as an incentive to use it.

At its simplest, a wiki is software that lets users work together to create and edit a collection of linked web pages. The online encyclopedia Wikipedia is the best-known example - its 85,000 contributors have written, edited, and policed the content of more than nine million entries. Like Wikipedia, all wikis benefit from the network effect: The more people who use it, the theory goes, the better the quality of the information." **Read more...**

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night – the game for people who love to read!

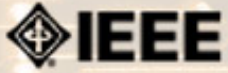
From www.bulwer-lytton.com

You and your friends will have fun—and some great conversation—testing your book smarts. Just listen to the opening line or two from a book and identify its title or author. It's that easy...and that challenging!

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night covers everything from novels to poetry, from mysteries to children's books, from science fiction to books made into movies, and six other categories. You'll know more than you think, and you'll get introduced to some great new reads along the way!

Whether you loved *Pride and Prejudice* or not, you and your friends will have fun revisiting the world of the classic—and not-so-classic—books that you first met in school, at the library, or on the beach. (Say, wasn't that the title of a book...?)

<http://www.goodreadgames.com/>.



Newsletter



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Society News: PCS Events

IPCC 2008 in Montreal

By IPCC 2008 Committee

We are looking for volunteers for IPCC 2008 in Montreal, scheduled for 13-16 July 2008. Volunteering for the conference is a great opportunity to meet other members, learn new skills, and to influence the society. For more information, go to <http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/?q=node/2>.

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Newsletter



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Society News: Member News

Seeking Nominations for IEEE Medals and Recognitions

The IEEE Awards Board is seeking nominations for IEEE Medals and Recognitions and encourages the use of its online Potential Nominee Form.

This form allows a preliminary review of a nominee by the selection committee and an opportunity to obtain feedback prior to submitting an official nomination form.

The Potential Nominee Form is available on the IEEE Awards Web Page at <http://www.ieee.org/portal/pages/about/awards/noms/potnomform.html>.

The deadline for submission of an official nomination form for any of the IEEE Medals and Recognitions is **1 July 2008**. For questions concerning the Potential Nominee Form, please contact [awards AT ieee DOT org](mailto:awards@ieee.org).

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Newsletter



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Society News: AdCom News

Upcoming AdCom Meeting

By AdCom

The AdCom meets three times per year, twice in person and once as a virtual meeting.

The next AdCom meeting will be held at Mercer University at the 28-30 March. If you are interested in attending, please contact **Tom Orr** or **Mark Haselkorn**.

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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.

RFID Conference 2008

WCNC 2008

ISPLC 2008

CHI 2008 Agile Workshop

NOMS 2008

Encompassing Knowledge

ICCSC 2008

SECON 2008

WM-SCI 2008

KGCM 2008

CITSA 2008

SIBIRCON

itSMF 2008

METM 2008

RFID Conference 2008

Conference:	IEEE International Conference on RFID 2008
Dates:	17-19 March 2008
Location:	Las Vegas, NV USA
Proposals Due Date:	10 November 2007

Acceptance Date: 7 January 2007
Final Paper Due Date: 25 January 2008
Website: <http://www.ieee-rfid.org/2008/default.asp>

IEEE RFID 2008 is the second annual conference dedicated to addressing the technical and policy challenges in the areas of radio frequency identification (RFID) technologies, their supporting large-scale distributed information systems, and their applications.

See the website for more information: <http://www.ieee-rfid.org/2008/default.asp>.

WCNC 2008

Conference: IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking Conference
Dates: 31 March - 1 April 2008
Location: Las Vegas, NV USA (co-located with CTIA)
Proposals Due Date: 1 September 2007 for tutorials
 20 September 2007 for papers/panels
Acceptance Date: 3 December 2007
Final Paper Due Date: 4 January 2008
Website: <http://www.ieee-wcnc.org/2008/>

IEEE WCNC is the premier wireless event for wireless communications researchers, industry professionals, and academics interested in the latest development and design of wireless systems and networks. Sponsored by the IEEE Communications Society, IEEE WCNC has a long history of bringing together industry, academia, and regulatory bodies. In 2008, IEEE WCNC will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, co-located with CTIA WIRELESS 2008 (the world's largest wireless show). IEEE WCNC 2008 registrants will have free admission to the CTIA exhibit floor.

ISPLC 2008

Conference: 2008 IEEE International Symposium on Power-Line Communications and Its Applications (ISPLC 2008)
Dates: 2-4 April 2008
Location: Ramada Plaza Jeju Hotel in Jeju Island, Korea
Website: <http://www.isplc2008.org/>

The symposium is centered on the general problem of communicating over power lines. It focuses on the latest technological advances in power line communications, as well as on current and future applications of power line communication systems. The goal of the symposium is to bring together academia, industry, and standardization organizations to stimulate research, development, and commercialization of all aspects of power line communication technology. The ISPLC 2008 is sponsored by the IEEE Communications Society, technically co-sponsored by the IEEE Power Engineering Society, and supported by Korea Information and Communications Society (KICS) and Korean Institute of Electrical Engineers (KIEE).

CHI 2008 Agile Workshop

Conference:	CHI 2008 Workshop: Optimizing Agile UCD
Dates:	5 April 2008
Location:	Florence, Italy
Website:	http://agileucd.editme.com/

The goal of this workshop is to improve future Agile user-centered design (UCD) experiences for User Experience (UX) practitioners (such as interaction designers, usability professionals, UI designers, etc.) by investigating best practices for Agile UCD.

To achieve this, senior UX practitioners with prior experience on an Agile project will share their knowledge and example work, collaborating in order to accomplish the following:

- Identify success factors for Agile UCD
- Find and remove obstacles that block Agile UCD
- Find opportunities that Agile projects give us
- Identify best UX practices for Agile UCD
- Identify UX skills that Agile projects need.

This workshop is a full-day extension to the successful Informal SIG of the same name at CHI 2007. What we'd like to happen this year is a more in-depth walkthrough of some examples of best practices, based on a few key areas of interest identified prior to the conference by the participants.

The results of this collaboration will be shared with the wider UX community (including those new to Agile development practices), but the participants should have experience in both UCD practices and Agile development.

Detailed guidelines for proposals are at the workshop website (<http://agileucd.editme.com/cfpchi2008>). Proposals should be no longer than 4 pages in length, and should be sent to Desirée Sy ([desiree DOT sy AT autodesk DOT com](mailto:desiree.DOT.sy.AT.autodesk.DOT.com)). Any questions about the workshop can also be sent to Desirée Sy.

Participants will be notified by November 28th, and the topics for the workshop will be decided collectively by the group.

NOMS 2008

Conference:	IEEE/IFIP Network Operations and Management Symposium Pervasive Management for Ubiquitous Networks and Services
Dates:	7-11 April 2008
Location:	Salvador da Bahia, Brazil
Website:	http://www.ieee-noms.org/2008

Paper Submission Deadline Extended!

Held in even-numbered years, NOMS 2008 will follow the 20 years tradition of NOMS and IM as the primary forum for technical exchange of the research, standards, development, systems integration, service provider, and user communities. NOMS 2008 will present up-to-date approaches and technical solutions for integrated systems and services including communication networks, host systems, enterprise applications, service oriented architectures, and delivery of management

services. The conference provides a peer-reviewed program of technical sessions, application sessions, software tools sessions, tutorials, BoF, posters, and panels as well as vendor exhibits.

Encompassing Knowledge

Conference:	2nd International Conference from 360° conference series: Encompassing Knowledge
Dates:	15-17 May 2008
Location:	University of Aarhus, Denmark
Website:	http://www.asb.dk/encompassingknowledge.aspx

The conference is the second of what we plan to be a biannual series of conferences that approach communication and concrete texts from a 360° perspective. Conference languages are English and German. The Practitioners' Track is targeted at Danish participants and will be held in Danish.

The conference will deal with knowledge from three perspectives:

Track 1: Communication of Specialised Knowledge

The generation of specialised knowledge is a necessary precondition for a knowledge society. However, it is not sufficient in itself, as the added value of the knowledge society lies not in the specialised knowledge, but rather in the communication of it to a wider audience. It is thus a necessary precondition for a knowledge society that specialised knowledge is communicated in such a way that it may be exploited by others.

Track 2: Representing Knowledge in Texts

Knowledge may be defined as information that has been stored in mental structures and is linked to specific situations in which it is used. In spite of this limitation, it is still possible to represent knowledge outside mental structures, for instance, in texts that are used to communicate knowledge from one mental structure to another.

Track 3: Knowledge Construction and Learning

Knowledge is linked to mental structures and the situations in which it is used, and the transformation of information to knowledge takes place in the individual's assimilation and accommodation processes.

ICCSC 2008

Conference:	International Conference on Circuits & Systems for Communications
Dates:	26-28 May 2008
Location:	Shanghai, China
Website:	http://www.ieee-iccsc.com/2008/

IEEE ICCSC 2008 offers an opportunity to learn about state of the art technologies and industry development for the multimedia wireless Internet of the near future. ICCSC 2008 welcomes researchers, developers and business managers in a varied program including both technical sessions and industry-oriented panels. Speakers will be both local figures and prominent individuals from around the world. The primary language of this conference is English, but some sessions will be conducted in Chinese.

SECON 2008

Conference:	Fifth Annual IEEE Communications Society Conference on Sensor, Mesh and Ad hoc Communications and Networks (SECON 2008)
Dates:	16-20 June 2008
Location:	San Francisco Bay Area, California, USA
Proposals Due Date:	11 December 2007
Acceptance Date:	14 March 2008
Final Paper Due Date:	4 April 2008 (Midnight Eastern Standard Time, GMT-5)
Website:	http://www.ieee-secon.org

IEEE SECON provides a forum to exchange ideas, techniques, and applications, discuss best practices, raise awareness, and share experiences among researchers, practitioners, standards developers and policy makers working in sensor, ad hoc, and mesh networks and systems.

The conference will provide collegiality and continuity in the discussions of the various topics among participants from the industrial, governmental and academic sectors.

Original technical papers on the communications, networking, applications, systems and algorithmic aspects of mesh and sensor networks, as well as those that describe practical deployment and implementation experiences are solicited for presentation and publication.

WM-SCI 2008

Conference:	12th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics: WM-SCI '08
Dates:	29 June - 2 July 2008
Location:	Orlando, FL USA
Proposals Due Date:	24 October 2007
Acceptance Date:	28 November 2007
Final Paper Due Date:	14 February 2008
Website:	http://sciis.org/WM-SCI08

Submitted papers or extended abstracts will have three kinds of reviews: double-blind (by at least three reviewers), non-blind, and participative peer-to-peer reviews.

Authors of accepted papers who register for the conference can have access to the reviews made to their submission so they can improve the final version of their papers. Non-registered authors may not have access to the reviews of their respective submissions.

Awards will be granted to the best paper of those presented at each session. From these session's best papers, the best 10%-20% of the papers presented at the conference will be selected for their publication in Volume 6 of *JSCI Journal* (www.iiisci.org/Journal/SCI) and sent free to over 220 research libraries. Libraries of journal author's organizations will receive complimentary subscriptions of at least one volume (6 issues).

KGCM 2008

Conference:	2nd International Conference on Knowledge Generation, Communication and Management: KGCM 2008
Dates:	29 June - 2 July 2008
Location:	Orlando, FL USA
Website:	http://www.sciis.org/KGCM2008

Generated knowledge is usually communicated. Implicit or explicit management of knowledge generation and communications is usually required for both: knowledge generation and communication. Knowledge management also requires knowledge generation and/or communication, i.e., meta-knowledge regarding knowledge management, which has been explicitly being addressed on the organizational level. These three dimensions are highly related to each other.

The phenomena of Knowledge Generation, Communication and/or Management has been addressed in the academic, private and public sectors; in universities and in business; in disciplinary research and in multidisciplinary projects. Support systems are being designed and implemented in and for the three sectors. Consequently, the areas and topics that will be covered in KGCM 2008 will be about KGCM concepts, theories, models and methodologies as well as technologies, supporting systems, tools and techniques. Submissions of papers/abstracts regarding scientific research, engineering designs, technological innovations, case studies, and products development are accepted.

CITSA 2008

Conference:	5th International Conference on Cybernetics and Information Technologies, Systems and Applications
Dates:	29 June - 2 July 2008
Location:	Orlando, FL USA
Proposals Due Date:	5 March 2008
Acceptance Date:	2 April 2008
Final Paper Due Date:	22 May 2008
Website:	http://www.infocybereng.org/citsa2008

CITSA 2008 is an International Multi-Conference being organized with the purpose of providing researchers, practitioners, developers, consultants, and end-users of computerized, communications and/or control systems and technologies, as well as their industrial and social applications in the private and the public sectors, an opportunity to join in a common place sharing experience and knowledge. It is intended to be a forum to expose and share current and future research work and innovations in these areas, as well as in the relationships among them.

One of the primary objectives of CITSA 2008 is to promote and encourage "interdisciplinary cross-fertilization", "epistemic things" and the production of "technical objects". Its intellectual perspective context is systemic thinking and practice, including the analogical thinking that characterizes the Systems Approach.

SIBIRCON 2008

Conference:	International Conference on "Computational Technologies in Electrical and Electronics Engineering"
Dates:	21-25 July 2008
Location:	Novosibirsk Scientific Centre, Novosibirsk, Russia
Proposals Due:	1 March 2008
Acceptance Date:	21 April 2008
Final Paper Due:	16 May 2008
Website:	http://sibircon2008.sibsutis.ru/

Previously unpublished contributions from a broad range of topics in the sphere of the IEEE activities are solicited, including (but not limited to) the following areas:

- Coding theory
- Information theory
- Cryptography and data security
- Education and e-learning
- Microwave theory and techniques
- Energy conversion and renewable energy
- Telecommunications
- Engineering in medicine and biology

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.



Calls for Articles/Proposals/Courses

METM Spring Workshops

LeaderPoint Executive Experience

Mentors Needed

IEEE Educational Opportunities

International Journal of Design

Design Squad TV

Today's Engineer

METM Spring Workshops

Courses:	http://www.metmeetings.org/
Dates:	various through June 2008
Location:	Barcelona, Spain

MET is pleased to announce its Barcelona workshop programme for spring 2008 (29 February – 28 June), with 3 new titles and 5 of MET's established workshops making up the list. MET's spring workshop programme not only provides skills updating opportunities for people within easy reach of this city, it also gives us the chance to pilot new workshops with a view to bringing tested materials to larger groups at our annual meetings (next one: 11-13 September in Split, Croatia).

Visit <http://www.metmeetings.org/?section=workshops> for information on the workshops and on how to register.

Date (time)	Topic (leader) and brief description	Venue	Fee (members)
Fri 11 April(17:30-21:00h)	Practical tools for improving text flow: focus on information ordering (ME Kerans)	Barcelona TBA	€25
Fri 18 April (TBA)	A genre analysis approach to translating and editing research articles (Alan Lounds)	Barcelona TBA	€25
Tues 29 April (TBA)	Practical tools for improving text flow: focus on punctuation (T O'Boyle)	Barcelona TBA	€25

Fri 23 May (17:30-21:00h)	NEW! Using proofreading marks [working title] (ME Kerans and Bea Mas)	Barcelona TBA	€25
Fri 27 June (17:30-21:00h)	Righting citing: principles and strategies for editors and translators (I Patten)	Barcelona TBA	€25
Sat 28 June (10:00-13:00)	Managing plagiarism: an approach to dialog between authors and editors (ME Kerans)	Barcelona TBA	€25

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

Staying technically current in today's ever-changing workplace is a career must if you want to maintain your professional edge or your P.E. license as required by more than 30 states in the US. IEEE offers an innovative new product called *Expert Now* as well as a growing service, Education Partners Program to help meet your continuing professional development needs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

International Journal of Design

International Journal of Design: Call for Papers

<http://www.ijdesign.org>

The *International Journal of Design* is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal devoted to publishing research papers in all fields of design.

Our vision is to publish high-quality design research, and to disseminate this research to the widest possible audience. Our Editorial Board consists of leading design researchers from all over the world, all of whom are contributing their valuable time and expertise to help establish a high standard for this journal. The journal is published both online and in print. The online version is open access, freely available for anyone, anywhere to download, read, distribute, and use, with proper attribution of authorship, for any non-commercial purpose. A printed version of the journal will also be available.

Submit your best work to the *International Journal of Design!*

Topics include:

- Social-Cultural Aspects of Design
- Globalization and Localization Approaches to Design
- Design Strategy and Management
- Ergonomics & Perceptions in Design
- Design Theories and Methodologies
- Computer Applications in Design

The first issue is now available.

Design Squad TV Seeks Projects

From *Society Sentinel*, 13 June 2007

The production crew for the PBS television series *Design Squad* is soliciting ideas for engineering projects that will appeal to their 9 to 12 year-old target audience. The IEEE provides funding for this series that soon will begin filming episodes for its second season.

The series follows two teams of high school students, mentored by professional engineers, as they compete to design and build a functional machine. The show's producers at WGHB, Boston, Massachusetts, are seeking projects that would be visually interesting, serve a client with a specific need, and provide the opportunity for multiple solutions. Past projects have included building a machine that makes pancakes and designing a summer sled for LL Bean.

Ideas for new shows may be emailed to the show's executive producer, [Marisa Wolsky](#).

To learn more about *Design Squad*, visit <http://pbskids.org/designsquad/>.

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

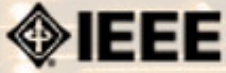
by **George McClure**

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

Technology topics can be made interesting, too.

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

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Job Announcements

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

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**.

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

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

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

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

- **Submit articles electronically in MSWord or RTF format to [pcsnews.editor AT ieee.org](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.



Guidelines

Editorial Schedule for 2008

by Kit Brown

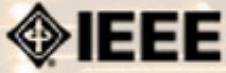
The following table shows the proposed themes for each issue through the year. If something particularly timely occurs during the year, these themes may change.

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

Web 2.0

Editorial Schedule for 2008

Month	Theme
January 2008	Writing
February	Web 2.0
March	Proposals/Business Cases
April	Agile Documentation/ Writing Requirements
May	Project Management
June	User-Centered Design
July/August	Information Economy
September	International TC
October	Reports and White Papers
November	Information Architecture
December	Presentations



Guidelines

Book and Website Review Guidelines

by Kit brown

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

Here are some hints for constructing the review:

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

The reviews should meet the following guidelines:

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