



Quick-Starting User-Centered Design

by Anita Salem

Many of the people I work with who are trying to design information and interfaces understand the benefits of focusing on the users, but often don't know where to start. They are writers, UI designers, programmers, and program managers. They operate at the "doing" level of organizations, and are constantly looking at improving their processes under tight budgets and short time-lines. Usually, they've read a bit about usability or task analysis, but they don't have a great deal of experience or knowledge in pulling it all together. [Read more...](#)

• Tools

Managing the "Technical" in Technical Communication

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• Election Results

Congratulations to the Winners of the PCS AdCom Elections!

The AdCom is now composed of representatives from Regions 1-6 (USA), Region 7 (Canada), Region 8 (Europe/Middle East/Africa), Region 9 (Latin/South America), and Region 10 (Asia Pacific). Please join us in welcoming the following people to the IEEE-PCS AdCom...[Read more](#)

• ABET

What to Expect from an ABET Site Visit

An ABET site visit might not seem like a sufficiently substantial topic for this column. And yet, as someone who had always been on the periphery of previous ABET visits, I was curious to witness firsthand what would go on when the group of evaluators and observers arrived on our campus. While I have covered the preparations for an ABET accreditation site visit (in writing the Self Study Report, with establishing assessment processes and documenting results, and so on), I find that the actual visit is also crucial to the accreditation process....[Read more.](#)

• Reviews

Matters of User Experience

The success of professional communication depends on delivering the information quickly, concisely, and correctly. But, as the audience gets more demanding, these basics are not enough. The conscious audience now wants a seamless and better experience from the entire product - including the presales, marketing, and product-related communication. *UXmatters* is a volunteer-driven, non-profit webzine focussing on UX with a talented team of practitioners-writers. You will find a wide spectrum of topics related to UX, including Information Design and Usability. ... [Read More.](#)



Feature

Quick-Starting User-Centered Design

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Many of the people I work with who are trying to design information and interfaces understand the benefits of focusing on the users, but often don't know where to start. They are writers, UI designers, programmers, and program managers. They operate at the "doing" level of organizations, and are constantly looking at improving their processes under tight budgets and short time-lines. Usually, they've read a bit about usability or task analysis, but they don't have a great deal of experience or knowledge in pulling it all together.

User-centered design (UCD) is one process that addresses these needs. There are plenty of books and articles out there on UCD tools and techniques, so I thought I'd focus more on some strategic issues that can help to make you more successful in your start-up efforts.

In my experience, there are two critical challenges that you will face—getting management support and maintaining the right focus. Part one of this article starts with a few hints to help you with your change management efforts. Part two provides some advice on how to make sure you focus on the right things when looking at what people will do with your product.

Part 1. Getting management to support your effort

We all know that getting the executive team to support our efforts is critical to any program's success. You need to show management that there is enough value for the money spent. You could do a comprehensive feasibility study or a cost/benefit analysis of using a UCD process, or you can simply show them. Here are some suggestions on how to show management that UCD works.

Start small, stay small

Just as you write drafts and prototype, pick a core activity that you can use as proof of concept. Pick an activity that is fairly self-contained. This might be an installation guide, a wizard, or a sign-in process. Design this activity using UCD techniques. Then, do this again with another activity. Starting small allows you to build your confidence and skills, and the same time create a knowledge base of your users and their activities. The small improvements you make on your existing version will give you the foundation and credibility to make comprehensive improvements on your next version.

Show the Value

When you select an activity, pick one that has benefit to both your customers (users) and to the business owners. Find an activity that is critical to your product's success and will provide a clear return on investment. For example, by improving

trouble-shooting procedures, you can reduce customer support costs, and by making a registration process more usable, you can increase registration rates. Measure the benefits before and after. Then you can show management what the potential is for switching to a UCD process.

Partner with those in power

Don't do this alone. Find someone in your organization who has a lot of influence. In some companies it's a Vice President, in some it's a respected programmer, and in some it's the sales department. Find out what their pain points are and see how you can align yourself with their needs. Also, take a closer look at those management memos you receive. What are some of the key themes? Are they talking employee efficiency? Increased market share? Improved customer service? Use these as indicators of what is important to management.

Setting up a UCD process is just the first challenge. The next challenge is to understand exactly what is important when you look at your users.

Part 2. Maintaining a Focus on Goals

Initial work in user-centered design generally focuses on who the users are—their skills, knowledge, and context of use. Usually, the next step is to focus on the tasks that users do, for example, add a user, locate an item, register, etc. What I often see missing, however, is the big picture view of things—users engaged in activities with clear goals and outcomes. That's not to say that you should toss out all those task lists or use cases. Just don't stop there.

Focus on goals

When looking at what users want to do with your product, focus on their goals. Don't force users to do tricks for a reward. For instance, take the task case "register". If you're shopping for a book, are you looking to register? Why then do some book sites make you register in order to save and compare items? They do it because they have lost site of the users' goals. If you're looking to "Find the best book on UCD", a related goal is to "Save interesting books". If I make my customers "register" in order to compare or save books, I'm likely to lose some customers because I've put a task barricade in front of their goal.

Reduce users' task load

It's inevitable that, as you look at what people do, you'll start uncovering a lot of steps. When examining ways to lessen the amount of work that users have to do, I make sure that I can always connect a task with a clear user outcome. I ask myself "Does the user really want to do this? Is this the shortest route to an outcome?". If the answer is no, I do everything possible to eliminate the task. Take the task of editing this article. Do I really want to do the tasks of "spell-checking" and "correct errors". No, I just want the outcome of an error-free document. Whoever designed the "autocorrect" in Microsoft Word recognized this and offers you the option to have the system automatically correct your common misspellings. With auto-correct, the system now does the work.

Link activities

Finally, avoid designing events in isolation. When trying to accomplish a goal, people often perform a series of related activities. For instance, when I received my new mobile phone, I wanted to know how to set it up the way I like it. What the

manual gave me was the parts of the phone—calls, messaging, and a control panel. If the writers had recognized that my goal of “personalize my phone” included a string of activities, they would have created a far different manual. They would have established a category titled “personalize”, and then offered all of the activities associated with that goal—select ring tone, select screen image, set time, etc. When designing goal-based interactions, think in terms of what comes before and what comes after. Your users will appreciate it.

Summary

Switching your organization to a user-centered development process is possible without a complete process overhaul. Above, I discussed a few ways I found to make that job easier. For more information on specific organizational and UCD processes, I also recommend the following resources:

“Leading Change”. By John P. Kotter. 1996.

“User and Task Analysis for Interface Design”. By JoAnn T. Hackos, Janice C. Redish, 1998.

“About Face 2.0: The Essentials of Interaction Design”. By Alan Cooper & Robert Reimann, 2003.

“Observing the User Experience: A Practitioner's Guide to User Research”. By Mike Kuniavsky, 2003.

“Rapid Contextual Design : A How-to Guide to Key Techniques for User-Centered Design.” Holtzblatt, Wendell, and Wood, 2004.

Anita Salem is the founder of SalemSystems Inc., a user research and design company. Since 1995, Anita has helped organizations align their product strategies with business goals and user needs. Working with organizations as diverse as the Gates Foundation, Cisco Systems, HomeGrocer.com, and the City of Seattle, she has led organizations in the customer-driven design process. Anita is also a corporate trainer in user-experience design and is a lecturer at the University of Washington. Join Anita and other communications professionals at the 2007 Usability Professionals Conference to talk more about UCD and organizational change. Her corporate website is www.salemsystems.com.

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Tools and Technology

Managing the “Technical” in Technical Communication

by Neil Perlin

The appearance of word processors in the late 1970s changed how we write our material and began the growth of the “technical” aspect of technical writing. Today, the technical aspect seems overwhelming; technical communicators can say with a straight face that “XHTML is HTML recast as an instance of XML that’s valid according to the XHTML DTD.” The technology seems to have overwhelmed the writing aspect to the point that traditional technical communicators are considering retiring or changing careers.

This column offers nine observations and suggestions about managing that “technical” aspect. None of these notes and suggestions are new or radical, but I often find myself emphasizing them in presentations and with clients.

The Technical Aspect

Technology has always been part of communication; it’s just that our view of technology keeps evolving. The pencil was high technology several centuries ago. (See *The Pencil* by Henry Petroski for a discussion of pencil technology and its social impact.) The slide rule was high technology several decades ago. The Pentium III was high technology several years ago. And so on... Content is king, but technology lets us deliver it.

1. Tools Are Good Things

Tools are simply the mechanisms that let us write, control, and distribute our content. It might be nice to be able to write without worrying whether Adobe was going to support RoboHelp or looking for a SWF-to-MP4 converter, but RoboHelp and SWF are the tools of our trade today.

2. WYSIWYG Tools Are Good Things

Some technical communicators don’t use, or even dislike, WYSIWYG tools. Some may have to hand-code advanced HTML features because their WYSIWYG tool’s interface doesn’t support those features. Others just consider hand-coding using Notepad to be more macho. However, WYSIWYG is better than hand-coding because hand-coding is:

- **Slow.** A WYSIWYG tool can insert code faster than we can type that code.
- **Error-prone.** Any hand-coder has horror stories about problems caused by typos.
- **Whimsical.** In the past, authors demonstrated coding creativity by taking short-cuts that broke proper syntax and came back to haunt them later.
- **Dependent on authors having code skills.** If one author hand-codes the material, authors hired later to maintain or update the material need the same coding skills.

- **Misdirecting of our concentration.** We should be focused on creating content, but hand-coding requires that we focus on coding.

3. Stay in the Mainstream

Stay in the mainstream of tools and technologies. Going outside the mainstream puts you at risk of going into a tool or technological dead end. For example, some companies still use ForeHelp, once RoboHelp's main competitor, years after the vendor closed. Many companies still use the WinHelp format, even after Microsoft unofficially killed it in 1997 (and has apparently killed it for good in Vista). These companies must now change tools or formats in a hurry, but they may be unable to find authors who still know the old tools or formats. Converting in a hurry, with little technical support, is when things go wrong.

4. Get Trained On Your Tools

Get formal training on the tools you use. It is possible to teach yourself how to use your tools, but the effort is often so difficult and the result so inefficient or even wrong that it isn't worth it. (Some tools even have "hidden" features, like RoboHelp's on-the-fly style creation, that are almost impossible to find on your own.) Training can be expensive, but a trained author makes so much better use of a tool as to quickly recover the training cost.

5. Learn About the Environment Behind Your Tools

Learn about the technologies that directly or indirectly support your tools. This has two benefits:

- **Fewer mistakes.** Companies that are new to online authoring, for example, often confuse WebHelp and Web Help or use RoboHelp for Word instead of RoboHelp HTML and have major problems with their projects.
- **Fewer overlooked features.** Companies that are new to online authoring often don't know that there are such things as style sheets, let alone why to use them.

Why does this matter? When online first appeared in the early 1990s, management saw it as more of a curiosity than a requirement. Authors didn't face the tight schedules that exist today so there was time to make mistakes and learn from them. Today, tight time-to-market requirements don't give authors the time to learn from their mistakes.

6. Learn About Upcoming Technologies

New technologies appear all the time. You may never use DITA or create SVG graphics, but it's important to at least know what these technologies are in order to understand how they may affect your tool selection and use. In the past, companies made poor technical or tool or design decisions because they didn't plan for or understand technical change. Today, we know technical change is coming and have to deal with it.

7. Document Your Authoring Tool Experiences

Document what you've learned about your tools' features and quirks in order to maintain a reference database for your documentation group. Without such a reference, it's easy to forget how to correct a complex but infrequent bug. Or, you may waste time on hold for technical support for a problem that others in your department understand but have never documented. And, if the one person who always seems to know the answer takes another job, your internal knowledge base

disappears.

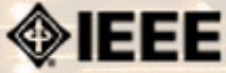
8. Make Sure Your Tools Support Your Methodologies

Define your content creation methodologies, like single sourcing and structured writing, and make sure your tools support those methodologies. Definition is crucial here; there are many definitions of single sourcing and structured writing so it's risky to take a vague claim like "supports single sourcing" at face value.

9. Make Sure Your Tools Support the Company's Strategy

Make sure the content you create and your tools support your company's strategic goals, and be able to make that case to management. That will increase the documentation group's visibility within the company and help fend off outsourcing.

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



Newsletter



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President's Column

Usability...of PCS

This month's newsletter theme provides me an opportunity to inform you of activities underway to improve the 'usability' of the Professional Communication Society. It has been said that the PCS, the products and services it does provide, and others that it is ready to provide, are the 'best kept secret' in IEEE. There are several approaches being pursued to increase the usability, and visibility, of the PCS:

Conferences and workshops

We are reaching out to conference organizers for other societies within IEEE, to offer workshops and tutorials for professional development. The feedback we received from a lunchtime PCS panel session at the IMS2006 MTT-S conference in San Francisco this past June was very favorable, indicating the PCS needs to do much more teaming.

The opportunity to provide these workshops and tutorials must be made known to the conference organizers early in their planning cycle, to ensure time and space for them to occur, as well as having it appear as a registration option. In addition, the financial model for their provision must be covered with a Memorandum of Understanding, as the travel costs and any fee charged for workshop/tutorial provision must be covered.

The goal is to provide a quality workshop/tutorial option to conference attendees, thereby improving the value of their attendance overall, and simultaneously benefiting the sponsoring societies. This activity is a joint activity of the Membership Development and Publicity & Marketing Committees. If you are an organizer of conferences within another society, please contact me or Mark Haselkorn (VP, and Meetings Chair) so that we can begin discussing opportunities.

Website

The AdCom has approved a 'facelift' for the PCS website, with intent to make it easier to navigate, and contain dynamic and useful content to ensure it has value to current membership, and to attract new members. Sandy Bartell, interim PCS Webmaster, is leading this effort with several volunteers as one activity of the Electronic Information Committee.

Transactions and Newsletter

The IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication is highly regarded, publishing research on human communication issues in the workplace. As an engineer, I typically find a paper or two in the *Transactions* worth a quick read to which I can relate, since the subject matter in many cases examines the nuances of communication, often in the context of the technology being used. Sometimes, a paper discusses a tool used in my work (for example, an internet browser or collaboration software), and the conclusions drawn might cause me to ponder the way I present information at work. However, it is primarily a product aimed at academic PCS members in engineering, business or humanities, and not

workplace engineers (unless they also happen to be doing research related to human communication).

The PCS AdCom realizes that a better product for practicing engineers is the *PCS Newsletter*, and we have been discussing ways to make the *Newsletter* even more useful. We have some thoughts, but would appreciate hearing from you, the members.

Please contact either me, or Kit Brown, our Newsletter Editor, with suggestions. If you have something to offer in the way of an article, or a periodic column that would appeal to an engineering audience, we definitely want to hear from you!

By the way, the web-based Newsletter to date has been free to the public so far (that is, access is not restricted to only PCS members). We will soon be changing that to only allow PCS members access...therefore, make sure you renew your PCS membership for 2007! (Trivia: Did you know that the printable version of the September 2006 PCS Newsletter was 49 US letter-sized pages? Typically, the page count is in the mid-30s. That is a sizable newsletter...but there is always room for more!)

Regional Activities

As mentioned in prior newsletters, the PCS Regional Activities Committee, led by Tom Orr, has been successful in chartering a Japan Chapter, with fresh ideas for serving existing PCS membership in Japan, and growing membership. Tom recently announced the existence of their website, <http://www.fla.sophia.ac.jp/ieee-pcs/>. This is a great start in formalizing PCS activities in Region 10...and making them more 'usable!'

In summary, the PCS Administrative Committee intends to proactively let the 'secret' out, but the members of the AdCom cannot do this alone. We rely on you, as members of the PCS, to volunteer to help. Many hands make light work.

Are you on the conference committee for a major IEEE conference, and could you help negotiate the provision of a PCS workshop that would be beneficial to all involved? Will you be attending a major IEEE conference in the next year, and would you be willing to staff a booth for PCS (booth materials, and coaching, provided)? Do you have experience in the operation of IEEE Societies, and have some extra time to assist PCS committees with their deliverables?

Experience aside...do you want to become more involved with the PCS, and are you willing to learn something new? As always, I look forward to hearing from you...send me an e-mail, and I will connect you with the right person!

Other Happenings...

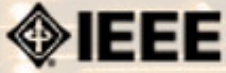
- **Infrastructure.** A proposal for restructuring the infrastructure allocation assessed to TAB societies is coming to TAB soon, with a target for implementation in 2008. Should this come to pass, based on current understanding of the proposal, it will obviate the need to continuously revisit the indirect infrastructure algorithm, and should allow all societies, including the PCS, to focus more on products, services, and growth of our members, and less on figuring out how to work the algorithm to better its finances. What the PCS AdCom has seen so far of the proposal has been very encouraging. The workshop I attended on October 16 to discuss approaches that financially challenged societies could take to obviate the challenges was not privy to infrastructure restructuring proposal (it was announced many days later); I believe the proposal is sound, and could address many of the issues discussed at the workshop.
- **TAB.** I mentioned in the last newsletter of my intent to attend the TAB Strategic Planning Committee meeting in Morristown, NJ, October 20. I regret that circumstances prevented me from attending. The SPC report will be

reviewed at the TAB meeting in New Orleans, which I am planning to attend!

Please write me, I would love to hear from you.

***Luke Maki** is the current president of IEEE-PCS and works for The Boeing Company.*

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ABET

What to Expect from an ABET Site Visit

by Julia Williams

An ABET site visit might not seem like a sufficiently substantial topic for this column. And yet, as someone who had always been on the periphery of previous ABET visits, I was curious to witness firsthand what would go on when the group of evaluators and observers arrived on our campus. While I have covered the preparations for an ABET accreditation site visit (in writing the Self Study Report, with establishing assessment processes and documenting results, and so on), I find that the actual visit is also crucial to the accreditation process. The two elements of the accreditation process—Self Study report and on-site visit—function together. The written document provides a picture of the program in advance of the visit, while the visit itself helps the evaluators confirm the details of the picture.

Rose-Hulman's visit occurred on October 22-24, 2006. As ABET, Inc. makes very clear, it is not acceptable for anyone associated with the institution to comment on the specifics of a particular visit or its results. No results of the visit are actually final, and no announcement about the accreditation status of the institution's programs is made, until the Engineering Accreditation Council (EAC) and the Computing Accreditation Council (CAC) meet later on during the accreditation year, in 2007. So my focus here is to outline the components of the visit to show you what you can expect when evaluators come to your campus.

ABET Site Visit, Day 1

First, depending on the programs that will be evaluated, you will be visited by a team chair and evaluators representing the EAC for each of the engineering programs under review. If your institution is undergoing review for its computer science program, you would be visited by a team chair and evaluator representing the CAC. In addition to the team of EAC or CAC evaluators, you could also have observers in the group. These observers are usually "evaluators in training", who are learning ropes of site evaluation. The evaluators themselves can also be a mixture of engineering faculty and working engineering professionals. Customarily, the visit begins on Sunday afternoon, when the group arrives on campus. Although the schedule of each visit varies, you can expect that the first day's schedule to include the opportunity for evaluators to tour the laboratories and facilities, to become familiar with the campus environment, and to review displays of students work.

Displays of Student Work

Displays of student work are an interesting element of the site visit. The Self Study Report contains results from the various assessment processes used to evaluate student achievement in defined outcomes. These outcomes are specific to each engineering program, so, for example, electrical engineering students must be assessed in topic areas appropriate to their

majors. All engineering programs must, however, show that their students are achieving the ABET-defined student outcomes, also known as the Engineering Criteria (EC) A-K. These eleven outcomes cover both technical and non-technical areas, including communication, teams, and ethics. The results of the assessments are included in graphical form in the Self Study Report, but evaluators also want to see samples of the evidence for themselves during the site visit. For this reason, each engineering program will probably prepare a room on campus that contains these displays.

Depending on the organizational strategy adopted by each program, the displays could be contained in a series of 3-ring binders, in which the assignments and samples of graded student work have been collected. The samples should represent student performance at “high,” “medium,” and “low” levels. There should be a binder for each required course within the curriculum of the program under review. In addition to the graded student work, evaluators may want to see the textbook(s) used in the course, the curriculum vitae of all faculty members teaching the courses in the program, and samples of other work deemed significant to the program, like capstone design reports. There is also the possibility that evaluators will want to see the textbooks, vitae, and graded student work for courses that are not housed in the engineering program, but which are still required in the major, such as technical communication. Given that multiple engineering or computing programs may need to show the same materials to multiple evaluators, the best strategy here is to create display room for institution-wide courses, such as the general education courses, required math and science courses, or, as I mentioned, technical communication.

Take care in preparing these notebooks to ensure that the information is clearly labeled and logically organized. Evaluators should not have to search through stacks and stacks of unlabeled pages to find the course and samples they need. At the end of the first day, the team will meet together to discuss its finding and make preparations for the second day.

ABET Site Visit, Day 2

On the second day of the site visit, the attention of the evaluators will shift from labs and graded problem sets to faculty, students, and staff. During Day 2, the evaluators will want to talk with each faculty member teaching in the program, to students who are majoring in the program, and to administrators and staff whose work supports the program. Before those conversations begin, there will probably be a morning session scheduled where all the evaluators meet with the president, deans, and other officers of the institution. This joint session can provide an overview of the institution, show support for maintaining/upgrading equipment, highlight unique features of the institution, and so on. Then, the evaluators return to their respective programs to begin interviews.

The evaluator meets with groups of students in order to gauge the climate in the program. Obvious student dissatisfaction will be remarked upon by the evaluator in his/her exit report. Likewise, student satisfaction will produce an equal and opposite result. Evaluators may ask questions regarding the availability of faculty, the support provided by the program for advising, and other issues related to students' experience. The same purpose lies behind the meetings with faculty. Evaluators will likely assess whether the faculty in a program are cognizant of the program's outcomes and objectives, and if they are engaged with the process of assessment and improvement. Since these are the elements that evaluators are looking for, it is probably a good idea to encourage faculty to become familiar with the program's outcomes and objectives, and to discourage faculty from using the interview as a place to air private grievances. As with the student interviews, obvious dissatisfaction or satisfaction will be considered when the evaluator writes the final visit report.

As the second day winds down, the evaluators will meet together to prepare their reports for the exit interviews. Actually, the reports they are writing are already in draft form when they arrive on campus. The reports themselves are written based

on what is in the Self Study Reports. But, the information evaluators gather during the site visit allows them to confirm their observations of the program or to change misconceptions they held.

ABET Site Visit, Day 3

Exit interviews comprise the final day's schedule. Each program evaluator will meet with the chair of the program under review, notifying him or her of the findings that will be contained in the review report. The team chair meets with the dean (s) and the president to notify them of the findings that will be in the report. After individual notifications are completed, the entire team offers a group report to the chairs and other officials in the style of a press conference.

At that time, each evaluator presents the results of the review in the form of "Concerns," "Deficiencies," and/or "Weaknesses." Concerns are those items that the evaluator believes require attention, but do not affect the accreditation status of the program. Deficiencies and Weaknesses are actionable items that must be corrected before the final accreditation status is assigned. Each program has the opportunity after the site visit is over to provide additional information that addresses deficiencies and weaknesses. If, however, these issues cannot be corrected before the final accreditation status is determined, then the program may be required to undergo an interim visit (in three years) or not be accredited at all. Once the report findings have been announced, the evaluators leave campus.

One More Thing

As I stated at the beginning of this piece, the exit interview results cannot be announced by the programs or the institution before the EAC and the CAC make their final decisions at their group meetings in 2007. I have heard tales of programs that jumped the gun on this issue, printing promotional materials or creating websites that herald accreditation status before official finalization. So, no matter what you see or hear during your accreditation site visit, I recommend that, for the time being, you keep it to yourself!

***Julia Williams** is the Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment and an Associate Professor of English for Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.*



Newsletter



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Society News: 50th Anniversary

49 and Counting

by 50th Anniversary Committee

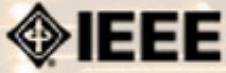
In 1957, Dr. Alfred Goldsmith helped to form the Institute of Radio Engineer's Professional Group on Engineering Writing and Speech. The IRE eventually became IEEE, and PGEWS eventually changed its name to our own Professional Communication Society.

That's right, next year PCS will recognize 50 years of service to the communication community, culminating in an anniversary celebration as part of IPCC 2007 in Seattle.

Share Your Stories--Volunteer!

We're looking for your ideas and suggestions for how best to recognize this important event. Contact Brenda Huettner at bphuettner@ieee.org to share stories or ideas, or to volunteer to help plan the big celebration.

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Editor's Column

Usability

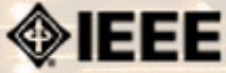
by Kit brown

My current travels have reminded me how much cultural expectations contribute to the usability (or lack thereof) of even the most mundane products, such as toilets, pay phones, trains, and buses. While ISO has tried to universalize signage worldwide, the most effective signs are still those that tell a story.

One of the sessions at IPCC last month showed signs from around the world and discussed a study that was done to determine what role culture played in the understandability of the signage. This study used college-educated people at a university. And yet, many of them could not correctly interpret some of the signs that warned of such things as explosions, or hot to the touch because either the graphic was unclear (the hand in the hot sign appeared to be grabbing something fluffy, for example), or because the reader of the sign lacked the appropriate frame of reference (some of the industrially related signs, for example).

Speaking of frame of reference, traveling in a country where you can't read the signs or speak the language is a good reminder of the daily difficulties faced by the less fortunate in our own societies who struggle with basic literacy. I happen to have a severe case of laryngitis and a wracking cough at the moment (I am allergic to cigarette smoke). I am also in Poland and only know about five phrases of Polish, none of them medically related. Though the pharmacist has been very patient, I still haven't been able to communicate that I need a cough suppressant that helps me sleep, and have gotten several different medications that do the opposite or that don't help the cough. Not being able to read the instructions on the medications means that I must place an enormous amount of trust in the pharmacist's limited English. It is a frustrating experience for someone used to being highly literate in medical terminology. The ultimate humbling experience, however, occurred when a bum on the street spoke more languages than I do and more fluently (today in Warsaw, I was asked in three languages for a cigarette by street person--I only understood the English).

My hope is that events like World Usability Day will increase the awareness of the need for international usability testing, particularly for products that impact our daily lives or that could cause serious harm if used incorrectly. We all need to challenge our own assumptions about what is "normal" and "useful", and remind ourselves that those definitions are often dependent on cultural expectations.



Reviews

Matters of User Experience

by Meghashri Dalvi

The success of professional communication depends on delivering the information quickly, concisely, and correctly. But, as the audience gets more demanding, these basics are not enough. The conscious audience now wants a seamless and better experience from the entire product - including the presales, marketing, and product-related communication.

User Experience

The key term here is User Experience (UX), which essentially conveys the overall quality of the experience and satisfaction a user gets when interacting with a specific design, product, or system.

This is a highly dynamic multidisciplinary field and a lot of interesting ideas keep floating between the UX professionals, their forums, blogs, and a few good UX sites. Many of these sites are fairly new and developing very quickly. As a practicing professional communicator, I try to keep updated with the latest happenings on this front, and the promising *UXmatters* (<http://www.uxmatters.com/>) is the one I watch really closely.

UXmatters is a volunteer-driven, non-profit webzine focussing on UX with a talented team of practitioners-writers. You will find a wide spectrum of topics related to UX, including Information Design and Usability.

I like its clean and usable site design that cleverly avoids bells and whistles. The monthly webzine content and archives are neatly classified into columns, editorials, features, and reviews. The UX News (<http://www.uxmatters.com/news.php>) column gives some excellent links and also lists relevant events.

Inspiring Articles

The articles published are of a very high quality and extremely thought provoking. Take a look at the recent article, “Trust and Blame” (<http://www.uxmatters.com/MT/archives/000075.php>), which deals with human error in a very analytical way.

Matteo Penzo’s thoroughly researched article “Label Placement in Forms” (<http://www.uxmatters.com/MT/archives/000107.php>) has generated so much buzz since it was published, it will become a legend soon.

Another brilliant article, “Deconstructing the Mobile Web” (<http://www.uxmatters.com/MT/archives/000098.php>),

discusses why the development on mobile content is so slow. You probably won't get such wide and deep coverage of specialized topics elsewhere.

The Communication Design column will particularly interest us professional communicators. Luke Wroblewski, who is the Principal Designer at Yahoo!, puts forward some really mind-blowing ideas in this column. Check out "Developing the Invisible" (<http://www.uxmatters.com/MT/archives/000097.php>) to understand white space and alignment – big "hygiene" factors in UX design. His cryptically titled "So the Necessary May Speak" (<http://www.uxmatters.com/MT/archives/000015.php>) overwhelms you with the simple idea and a compelling presentation.

As an added bonus, the visitors leave comments sharing their experiences and ideas, which themselves provide great insights.

Right Mix

I would say *UXmatters* has got their article mix just right. It covers theory and practice, presents innovative ideas and practical solutions, and introduces abstract concepts as well as sound tips.

It still is an evolving site and needs to update its glossary right away. I am sure over time it will become a definitive site on UX with novel content. *UXmatters* certainly opens up the spectacular world of user experience matters. And yes, it convinces you that a great user experience really does matter!

***Meghashri Dalvi** has combined her love of writing with her engineering and management background to create a successful career in technical communication. She currently works as a Consulting Technical Communicator in India, and is pursuing her doctoral research in Management.*



Reviews

The Conferences

By Kit brown

Since September, I have been in 12 time zones and have attended 6 conferences. Whew! So, this month, I decided to give you a brief recap of each conference:

Boise eLearning

Lavacon

STC Region 2

IPCC

TCWorld

LISA

Boise eLearning Conference

(<http://www.stc-src.org/elearning2006/index.htm>)

On a rainy fall morning in Boise, Idaho, about 100 people gathered from around the region and from several countries for a one-day seminar on elearning. The local chapters of the Society for Technical Communication and the American Society for Training Developers, and the Boise State department of Instructional and Performance Technology hosted the conference. Bill Horton's keynote, "Heresy, New Thinking in eLearning" was both entertaining and thought-provoking. In addition, Bill gave a talk on visual fluency, which was equally meaty. The other presentations ranged from strategic (eLearning in the 21st century and questioning our premises about elearning in "Are we selling snake oil?") to processes and standards, as well as details like cue summation and learning objects.

By all accounts, it was a successful first effort at joining three organizations together to create a learning experience for professionals in Boise and the surrounding area. Bill told me that it was one of the most content-heavy conferences he'd attended in quite awhile--high praise from him.

After taking Bill on the nickel tour of Boise (including the local **Basque museum**), a group of us met to attend the **Idaho Shakespeare Festival's** showing of *Spitfire Grill*. The Shakespeare Festival runs from June through September and usually

shows three Shakespeare plays, one non-Shakespeare play, and a musical at the outdoor amphitheater. Everyone brings picnic dinners and wine (and in September, blankets) to watch the plays under the stars as osprey fly overhead, the crickets chirp, and the river gurgles. It's a sublime experience.

Lavacon (<http://www.lavacon.org>)

The lovely island of Kauai, Hawaii was the venue for this commercial conference for technical communication managers. The Kauai Beach Resort was being "rebranded" while we were there, so there was a lot of construction going on, and a few interesting incidents with local flora and fauna. However, even that did not detract from the relaxed atmosphere of the islands, and it was fun to network with the 75 other attendees and speakers as we drank mai tais by the pool and learned to hula.

While there, I also discovered a couple of bits of interesting trivia: Hawaii is the largest consumer of Spam® in the world, and Kauai is home to the largest coffee plantation in the US. (They even sell coffee jelly at the plantation store!)

Lest you think it was all fun and games, however, the sessions were packed with great information, ranging from how to manage documentation in an agile programming environment to content management and maximizing your ROI on localization. The sessions I attended were well-done and content-heavy, and the leads were high quality. The sessions I spoke at (with Jamie Wagner, Brian Hertz, and Scott Ludwigsen) were well-attended and highly interactive as the audience had great questions. Alan Houser and Sarah O'Keefe were among the presenters, though both of them were speaking opposite me, so I didn't get a chance to see their presentations. Sarah did an entertaining closing session on the history of technical communication.

Brenda Huettner, Char James-Tanny, and I were in the last stages of getting our **book** to the publisher, so I didn't get as much time to network and to play as I would have liked. Jack Molisani (the conference organizer) is thinking of doing the conference on the mainland US next year. Take a look; it was worth the trip.

STC Region 2 (<http://www.stcuk.org/R2conf/>)

After three very short days at home, I was off again. This time, I headed to London for the STC Board meeting and the Region 2 conference. I arrived to the hotel just as most of the Board was having breakfast. John Hedtke and his wife Marilyn immediately dragged me off to the Tower of London and a river cruise so that I could force myself to stay awake and adjust to the time zone. Despite the fact that it was raining buckets in the morning, we had a great time playing tourist. We also ran into several of our colleagues who were also at the Tower at the same time. No ghosts made their appearance though.

The next day, I attended my first STC Board meeting (I'm the co-chair of the Global Membership committee), where I presented a mini-seminar on culture and communication. I was amazed at all of the activities that are going on, and came away from the meeting impressed with the dedication of the volunteers who serve on the Board.

Attending the Board meeting meant missing the first day of the conference, though I was able to attend a breakfast with many of the attendees and met with several international members for drinks after the Board meeting. The conference was held at the Hotel Britannia (which is stately and old--and quintessentially British), while many of us were housed at the Holiday Inn Express several blocks away. It made for a lovely walk (or would have if I hadn't had really bad shoes that

gave me horrific blisters).

On the second day, Char and I presented a session on managing virtual teams. Meanwhile, in the adjacent room, Geoff Hart presented on technology transfer. There were also sessions on the business case for XML (Sarah O'Keefe), DITA (Ian Lerner), and usability and information design (Patrick Hoffman). By most accounts, it was a good conference, with attendees from all over Europe, the US, and Israel.

I had a few days before needing to be at my next meeting in NY, so I took the opportunity to drive up to **Stratford-on-Avon** and Warwick for a couple of days. The weather was perfect for sight-seeing and general wandering about--crisp clear days and cool nights. Despite being the off-season, Stratford was packed with people attending the Shakespeare Festival. I didn't have a chance to see a play, but I did have dinner in the Actor's Bar (also known as the Dirty Duck), and visited most of the relevant Shakespearean museums, houses, and so on. **Warwick Castle** was my next stop; it's a bit over the top and excessively touristy but interesting nonetheless. In several of the areas of the castle, Madame Toussad's has provided life-sized wax figures set up in period dioramas, with signs written in script as they would have been during that period. I could have spent all day there, but had to get back to London for my flight to Boston.

IEEE-PCS (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/ipcc2006/information.php>)

After an uneventful flight, I landed in Boston, where I spent a couple of rainy days visiting Paula Berger and Char James-Tanny. Char and I headed to **Salem** to see the sights. Since it was only a couple of weeks before Halloween, it was the perfect time of year to see the Salem Witch Museum and to see the New England fall colors everyone raves about, and the weather cooperated with our wanderings.

After navigating around several accidents on the Mass Pike, I arrived in Albany to pick up Brenda from the airport and then headed to Saratoga Springs' Gideon Putnam Resort. This lovely hotel is surrounded by trees and meadows in a state park and, best of all, has a mineral spring spa right next door. (I can't even begin to describe the heaven of sinking into a deep tub that was actually long enough to submerge in and that was filled with iron-laden, warm water that made you feel as though you were wrapped in a blanket....needless to say, my travel-weary self took full advantage of the spa facilities, as did several other members of the PCS AdCom.)

The PCS AdCom agenda was full as always, with two full days of meetings. **Luke's column** talks about many of the topics we discussed, including the infrastructure tax issue and the desire to add to PCS' training and educational offerings. **Beth's conference** report also provides highlights.

Eliot Maisie gave a thought-provoking keynote on trends in communication as the world becomes flatter, and the need to turn content into stories (in other words, contextualize it) so that people can remember it.

John Carroll gave an interesting lunchtime keynote on minimalism in document design and how design practices have evolved over the years. I had the unexpected pleasure of sitting next to one of my professors from graduate school, Don Zimmerman, who I hadn't seen in years. We had a lot of fun catching up, and he told me that I'd turned out better than he thought I would (high praise coming from him; he was one of my toughest teachers).

Phylise Banner-Klein brought her father, Sy Saslow, to the conference. Sy is a lifetime member of IEEE and an inventor who has lived a truly interesting life. Phylise also did a fun and educational presentation on how technical communicators

can actively participate in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) projects to bring more context to the data.

Other interesting sessions included a panel discussion on book publishing, Neil Perlin's presentation about metadata, Brenda Huettner's talk about digital risk management, presentations on cross-cultural communication, and usability.

Unfortunately, I had to miss some of the sessions to work on the finishing touches of the book, in response to questions from our editor.

The awards banquet was at the nearby car museum, which made for some fun pictures and some interesting commentary from the engineers in the crowd. It was fun to meet several colleagues from Ireland, the UK, and Japan. Dr. Takashi Okuda very kindly took pictures for me (look for them in the December issue) at the banquet when my camera ran out of film (I really must put a digital camera on my Christmas list).

TCWorld (<http://www.tekom.de/tagung/tagung.jsp>)

After a week at home to play with my dog (I hope he still remembers me) and to catch my breath, it was back across the big pond--this time to Germany for TCWorld, which is put on by tekomp (the German technical communication society). Up until then, it had been 16 years since I was in Germany, so I was very excited to be back and practicing my very rusty tourist German on people. I was surprised at how quickly it came back, though I'm not yet conversational by any means.

On the way to Wiesbaden, I stayed with Prof. Jürgen Multhig and his family in Karlsruhe. His three boys all speak fluent English and German (their mom is American), and were a delight. While in Karlsruhe, I spoke to Jürgen's class about my experiences in the profession, a little bit about where I thought things were going, and so on. It was great fun.

The TCWorld conference opened with a wine tasting on a dark and foggy night at **Schloss Vollrad**. The Rheingau region is well-known for its Reislings, and the wine tasting was the perfect ice breaker. The Schloss (German for castle) was incredible--one room had leather wallpaper that had been hand-stamped in Spain. My favorite room was the last one we were in, with dark wood panelling, a huge fireplace, comfy chairs--the perfect place to curl up with a good book.

The Rhein Main Halle, where the conference was held, is a huge convention center, but is well-designed for conference traffic, except for the fact that the smoking area is right at the main entrance. Despite having almost 2000 attendees, the space never felt uncomfortably crowded (except around the beer and pretzel stands, which magically appeared every day at 430pm). Michael Fritz, Ursula Wirtz, and Helga Allmaras did a fabulous job of coordinating things and making everyone feel welcome.

The trade show portion of the conference was impressive, with three rooms of exhibits, and some of the booths were bigger than my living room. There were many tool vendors at the conference that I'd never heard of because they don't have much presence in North America, but are well-known in Europe. The sessions I attended were well-done, content-heavy, and left me hungry for more. Because the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) was a co-sponsor, one track was on localization topics. I enjoyed hearing the non-North American perspective on both technical communication and on localization. My session on implementing an internationalization strategy seemed to go well, though there weren't many questions (probably because it was right before lunch). I also would have liked the sessions to be longer--45 minutes was a bit short for the complexity and depth of some of the topics. Alan Houser and I once again spoke at the same times, so I wasn't able to attend his session (one of these days, Allen!)

Half the sessions were in English and half were in German, which was interesting and effective for the audience. I didn't attempt the German sessions, as my comprehension level is limited to directions, food, and beer.

For me the highlights of the conference were finally meeting Bert Esselink in person (we worked together on a virtual team for several years), meeting Don DePalma in person (we have corresponded on various topics and both write regularly for *Multilingual*), and finding out that Kendra Grey and I went to the same high school, though a couple of years apart. Kendra works at Multilingual and lives in northern Idaho, but we never see each other, except at conferences. I also got to meet with several **GALA** members with whom I've worked or corresponded over the years.

There is a Gutenberg press and museum near Wiesbaden that I really wanted to see, but instead, I ended up sick for a couple of days and got laryngitis. For an extrovert who loves to talk, that is the definition of hell--being at a conference surrounded by interesting people and not being able to communicate. I had to resort to writing down a few German phrases so that I didn't have to use my voice. Luckily, everyone I met was very kind and helpful (though some of my so-called friends had a good laugh at my croaky voice). Aki Ito, Kendra, and I did manage to wander around the old part of town for a couple of hours the day before I left for Poland.

LISA-Warsaw (<http://www.lisa.org/events/2006warsaw/>)

Ever since I worked with a group of guys from Poland, I have wanted to visit, so that I could use the few phrases that they taught me. When I saw that the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) was holding a conference in Warsaw, I leaped at the chance to go.

I arrived to a rainy fall day after a *very* early morning flight from Frankfurt. The conference was held at the Warsaw Intercontinental Hotel--very posh, with the associated price tag. After checking email and responding to some queries from the book editor, I wandered around town for awhile. Across the street is the Palace of History and Culture--a wedding cake-style building "given" to Poland by Stalin. Warsaw is a truly amazing place and the Poles are an incredibly resilient people. After the Nazis razed it during the Second World War, the Polish people rebuilt the old town and the palace in an exact replica of what it looked like before the war, only better. They paid exquisite attention to detail, down to the plaster walls, the paint style, and the aging of the bricks and stucco. I also loved the look of surprise when I said, "Thank you" in Polish. A lot of the signs are in both Polish and English, and most of the people speak at least some English. Since I still had laryngitis, it was difficult for me to try as much Polish as I would have liked.

This conference has a different audience and tone than the others. All of the attendees and speakers work in some aspect of localization, either on the client side or the vendor side, and most of them are relatively senior in their organizations. There were about 50 attendees, and about 10 exhibits. The exhibit space was cramped between sessions because it was essentially a foyer and was also where the refreshments were located. Unfortunately, there were also many people smoking in the small area, which definitely did not help my laryngitis. Luckily, my room was on a nonsmoking floor (I can't wait until Europe passes more stringent smoking regulations).

I was thankful that they provided a microphone for my talk, as I could barely speak above a whisper. Karen Eden from Oracle did a presentation on her efforts to start virtual communities of practice within Oracle. It was a great segue for my talk on virtual teams. One of the translators from the Romanian Ministry for Translation discussed the huge effort of translating the 96,000+ pages of the European Union's (EU) *acquis* into Romanian in preparation for its application for EU membership. The terminology management alone is a huge task, as the *acquis* has to mesh with Romanian legal

terminology and regulation. Several HP employees presented their process for global content management. It was interesting to hear the story from the perspective of the Grenoble, France team because I had participated in part of the project with the Boise, Idaho (US) HP team. Some of the other talks were more sales pitch than talk, which was a bit disappointing.

The networking that I could do with a limited voice capability was great, and the main reason for my attendance. It was also fun to finally put faces to names and to meet Michael Anobile, Rebecca Ray, Elina Yutlita, Ana Abgaryan, Arle Lommel, and Max Novikov of LISA.

After a couple of days of sightseeing in and around Warsaw, it will be finally time for home and my dog (hope he still remembers me). As much as I love traveling, I'm looking forward to sleeping in my own bed and to being home for awhile. Hopefully, by the time I get home, my laryngitis will be better and I can regale my friends with tales from the road.

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Newsletter



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Tidbits

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

Treo Designed with Consumer in Mind

From Wall Street Journal 12 October 2006

Palm plans to release the Treo 680 smartphone in 2007, and has redesigned it to make it smaller and more user-friendly. (You need a subscription to access the actual story) [Read more...](#)

World Wide Words

Contributed By Rudy Joenk

For the linguists and etymologists among you, World Wide Words examines the history and the evolution of meaning for various slang expressions, as well as obscure words that appear from time to time in English literature. [Read more...](#)

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Job Announcements

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

Aizu University

Illinois Institute of Technology

Aizu University in Japan: Assistant and Associate Professors

Contributed by Thomas Orr

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

Qualifications:

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

Duties:

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

Salary:

Based on experience and qualifications

Benefits:

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

Application Package:

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

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

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

Attention: CLR Faculty Selection Committee

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

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

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

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

Illinois Institute of Technology: Assistant Professor

Contributed by Kathryn Riley

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

Duties:

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

Qualifications:

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

Salary and Benefits:

Competitive.

Submission Guidelines:

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

Send to:

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

About IIT:

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

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



Society News: PCS Events

IPCC 2006 Wrap Up

by IPCC Conference Committee

What a great time in Saratoga Springs! IPCC 2006 opened with a bang on 23 October and closed on 25 October with a number of relaxed, rejuvenated, and inspired participants heading home. The Gideon Putnam Hotel was the perfect host, and the shopping and dining in downtown Saratoga Springs gave people a choice of things to do after hours.

Our opening Keynote Speaker, Elliott Masie of The Masie Center (<http://www.masie.com>) in Saratoga Springs, NY, opened the conference on a high note. His talk on fingertip knowledge was fun, inspiring, and, in many respects, quite profound. Watching the room, I saw a number of people taking copious notes.

Throughout the three days, attendees enjoyed sessions on everything from Cross Cultural Issues to Open Source Applications; XML and Usability; and Effectiveness of Visuals. They explored education issues ranging from distance education to electronic innovations and trends. They also learned how to write a book or prepare an article for publication in a scholarly journal.

Tuesday's highlights included an exhibit of rare books from the personal collection of Dr. Merrill Whitburn. Dr. Whitburn's collection includes everything from an early Strunk & White to engineering drawings to books from the 16th century. Our second Keynote Address of the conference was held during lunch on Tuesday, when we heard from Dr. John Carroll. Dr. Carroll elaborated on minimalism in document design.

We ended Tuesday with the Awards Banquet at the Saratoga Automobile Museum. Guests mingled among the classic Mercedes, Corvettes, and a 1931 Pierce Arrow. We were also treated to a Seattle video from the IPCC 2007 Committee.

The past three years have been fun and hectic at times. It is almost a let-down when the conference is over after spending so much time and energy planning and organizing. I need to thank our conference committee for the incredible work they did during that time:

- Roger Grice, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Program Chair
- Julia Williams, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, Proceedings Chair
- Steve Robinson, Nortel Networks, Treasurer
- Sandy Bartell, The Boeing Company, Publicity
- Liza Potts, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Webmaster

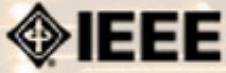
We also need to thank the organizations that helped make the conference possible:

- The Boeing Company

- Illinois Institute of Technology
- IEEE Schenectady Section
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Clarkson University School of Arts & Sciences
- IPCC 2007 (website coming soon!)

IPCC 2007 is in Seattle, Washington and will be a gala event celebrating PCS' 50th anniversary. Hope you can make it!

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Newsletter



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Society News: Member News

News from Region 10

by Thomas Orr, Chair IEEE PCS Japan Chapter

The chapter website is now available: <http://www.fla.sophia.ac.jp/ieee-pcs/>.

IEEE.tv

By Brenda Huettner, Membership Chair

IEEE.tv is a new internet-based, broadcasting network offering programming you just can't get anywhere else. IEEE.tv will produce and deliver special-interest programming for engineers and technologists. A collaborative effort of IEEE volunteers, members, and staff across the organization, the new service also will provide select content intended for the general public. General interest programming including those promoting careers in engineering and demonstrating new technology in everyday applications is available to anyone who visits the site. New programs will be added monthly.

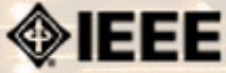
Special content will be available to members only. Check it out at <http://www.ieee.org/web/membership/IEEEtv/about.html>.

html! (You need a broadband or connection to view the content.)

Membership Renewals

By Brenda Huettner, Membership Chair

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



Society: Non-Society Events

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

[New Master's Programs at Illinois Institute of Technology](#)

[Master's Course in User Support at University of Twente](#)

[IEEE Communications Society GLOBECOM 2006 Expo](#)

[Second International Joint Conferences on Computer, Information, and Systems Sciences, and Engineering \(CISSE 2006\)](#)

[IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking Conference \(CCNC\)](#)

[International Symposium on Integrated Network Management \(IM 2007\)](#)

[ISTAS 2007: International Symposium on Technology and Society *NEW!*](#)

[IEEE International Conference on Communications](#)

New Master's Programs at Illinois Institute of Technology

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

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

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

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

These programs can be completed without a thesis or comprehensive exam. The GRE is waived for applicants who hold a B.

S. degree in a related field from a U.S. institution, completed with a minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0. Degree requirements for these programs can be completed online.

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

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

Master's Course University of Twente in The Netherlands

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

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

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

IEEE GLOBECOM 2006 Expo

Title: IEEE GLOBECOM 2006 Expo
Dates: 27 November to 1 December 2006
Location: San Francisco, CA USA
URL: <http://www.ieee-globecom.org/2006/index.html>

The IEEE Communications Society (COMSOC) has selected San Francisco for its first ever Communications EXPO, which will be co-located its 49 th Annual IEEE Globecom conference in November 2006.

The new EXPO will have exhibits by industry and a quality technical program focused for the design and development engineers in the communications industry. This will include:

- Design & Developers Forum
- Tutorials & Workshops
- Telecom Business Forum

Historically, the IEEE Globecom conference is focused on research and development. The technical program for IEEE Globecom 2006 will continue this emphasis. There will be 16 symposium conducted by the various COMSOC technical committees covering the major industry technologies and numerous hot topics.

CISSE 2006

Title: The Second International Joint Conferences on Computer, Information, and Systems Sciences, and Engineering (CISSE 2006)

Dates: 4-14 December 2006
Location: Virtual Forum
URL: <http://www.cisse2006online.org>

Proposal Submission deadline is **13 October 2006!**

CISSE 2006 provides a virtual forum for presenting and discussing the state-of-the-art research on computers, information and systems sciences, and engineering. CISSE 2006 is the second conference of the CISSE series of e-conferences.

The CISSE 2006 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 simple 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 after the conference both on a CD and as a book publication. Springer, the official publisher for CISSE, published the 2005 proceedings in 2 books.

Book 1: <http://www.cisse2006online.org/flyer1.pdf>

Book 2: <http://www.cisse2006online.org/flyer2.pdf>

Conference participants - authors, presenters and attendees - only need an internet connection and sound available on their computers 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 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.

Potential non-author conference attendees who cannot make the online conference dates are encouraged to register, as the entire joint conferences will be archived for future viewing.

IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking Conference (CCNC)

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

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

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

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

IM 2007

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

Proposals are due **24 August 2006!**

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

Integrated management of networked systems is facing new challenges, stemming from a combination of rapidly evolving technologies and an increased scrutiny from corporate customers. At the same time, as IT and network services become more and more ubiquitous, their reliability and performance become more critical for all kinds of enterprises. The resulting demands for improving and verifying service quality must be met in an environment of increasingly distributed and decentralized service provisioning, accelerated service lifecycles, and unprecedented security challenges. Today's IT management issues involve many diverse problems in controlling heterogeneous IT infrastructures, often across organizational boundaries. However, new and difficult challenges are emerging while aligning technical and organizational IT management to business requirements, thus calling for integrating management tools and measures "from bits to business value".

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

ISTAS 2007

Title: ISTAS: International Symposium on Technology and Society
Dates: 1-2 June 2007
Location: University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada USA

URL: <http://www.unlv.edu/faculty/dmh/ISTAS2007/>

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

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

IEEE International Conference on Communications

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

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

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Calls for Articles/Proposals/Volunteers

IPCC 2007 Call for Papers *NEW!*

PCS Needs a Webmaster

Today's Engineer

Technical Communication, STC's journal *NEW!*

IPCC 2007 Call for Papers

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

Proposals are Due 10 January 2007

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

Suggested Topics

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

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

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

Seeking an IEEE-PCS Webmaster

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

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

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

Webmaster Position Qualifications

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

Position Duties:

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

Required Skills/Experience:

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

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

How to Apply:

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

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

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

by George McClure

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

Technology topics can be made interesting, too.

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

***Technical Communication* Special Issue Seeking Submissions**

Contributed by Kirk St. amant

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

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

Description

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

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

Possible Topics for This Issue

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

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

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

Types of Submissions

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

Contact Information

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



Society News: AdCom News

Election Results

By Helen Grady, Nominating Committee Chair

The AdCom is now composed of representatives from Regions 1-6 (USA), Region 7 (Canada), Region 8 (Europe/Middle East/Africa), Region 9 (Latin/South America), and Region 10 (Asia Pacific). Please join us in welcoming the following people to the IEEE-PCS AdCom.

Luke Maki was re-elected as Society president, and **Mark Haselkorn** was re-elected as vice president.

Wally Lee, systems engineering consultant, was appointed to fulfill the remaining term for Ed Clark, who resigned from AdCom earlier this year.

Debbie Davy, technical communication consultant in Toronto, Ontario, was appointed to fulfill the remaining term for Steve Robinson, who also resigned from AdCom recently. **Jeffrey Douglas** will take over Steve's duties as Treasurer.

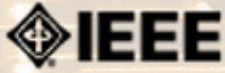
The following people were elected to AdCom by the membership:

- **Marjorie Davis**, Mercer University, School of Engineering
- **Mark Haselkorn**, University of Washington
- **Michaël Stehouder**, University of Twente, The Netherlands

The following people were elected by the current AdCom to serve:

- **Aaron Benitez**, information technology consultant, Veracruz, Mexico
- **Elizabeth Pass**, James Madison University
- **Kirk St. Amant**, Texas Tech University

Thank you to all the candidates who ran for office.



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

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

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

- **Submit articles electronically in MSWord or RTF format to pcsnews.editor@ieee.org.** These formats are more easily available to me than other word processing applications.
- **Provide articles that are 200-1000 words in length.** People tend to scan rather than read in an online environment. Short, well-written and relevant articles will be more beneficial to the audience than longer ones.
- **Provide a short bio (~25 words) and contact information.** Readers want to know about you. At a minimum, write a bio that tells your name, company, primary job title, email address and why this topic is of interest to you or what

experience you have in the area you wrote about. (This doesn't count as part of your word count.)

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



Guidelines

Editorial Schedule for 2006

by Kit Brown

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

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

Editorial Schedule for 2006-07

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



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.