PCS Russia Chapter Established

by Henrich S. Lantsberg

It gives me great pleasure to share with the readers of the *PCS Newsletter* the news that the IEEE PCS Russia Chapter has been established! IEEE General Manager John H. Powers advised us that the requirements of the IEEE bylaws were met and the Professional Communication Society Chapter of the Russia Section has been approved. The effective date of the chapter's formation was 1 July 1994. [Editor's note: The abbreviation "PCS" can represent either the Professional Communication Section of the Russian Popov Society or the Professional Communication Society of the IEEE, but its use is made clear by the context.]

This chapter is one of the first chapters among the IEEE technical societies in Russia, and the chapter is a quite representative one. It consists of 22 individuals: notable scientists and engineers in the computer and information sciences, leading professional communicators of Russia, and the heads of Russian information centers, research and academic institutes—including Prof. Yuri Gulyaev, Director of the Institute of Radio-engineering and Electronics, Russian Academy of Sciences, who is President of the Russian Popov Society and Chair of the IEEE Russia Section.

The impetus for this chapter came in New York in April 1990, in the pleasant aftermath of the IEEE SuperComm held in Atlanta, Georgia, where, together with a delegation of Russian scientists, I took part and presented a paper. My wish to establish relations with the PCS was so great that I under-

took my travel to the United States notwithstanding the fact that I had just been in the hospital for several months. I could not miss this opportunity to meet the PCS leaders and discuss problems of mutual interest.

This cherished dream to develop relations with IEEE PCS goes far back to 1956 when, for the first time, I met an IEEE delegation in Moscow during our annual Popov Society meeting. The dream was reinforced in 1967 when the Professional Communication Section of the Russian (then All-Union) Popov Society for Radio-engineering, Electronics, and Communications was founded.

My dream came to reality in 1990 when I met then-PCS President Dr. Rudy Joenk and his colleagues Richard Robinson, Herbert Michaelson, and Michael Goodman, and the idea for cooperation between the IEEE PCS and the Popov Society was generated. I consider this event as a milestone in our relations. The chapter formation efforts were further developed during the visit of PCS AdCom members to Moscow in September 1990, as well as dur-

INSIDE

FROM THE EDITOR
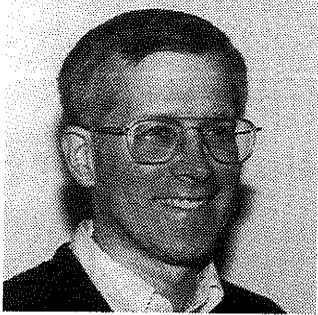
This issue contains two articles that resulted from the stuff of an editor's dream: unsolicited manuscripts. Sally Kmetz has contributed a piece on writing from a point of view that we take for granted most every day. Fredrick Gilbert provides some advice on oral presentations, a topic that is reinforced as both important and ignored every time I attend a professional conference or a local seminar. I'd be pleased if there were more submissions to the *Newsletter* from the PCS readership. There is seldom much of a wait between having your manuscript accepted and its publication: in terms of conventional publishing, it's virtually instant gratification of seeing your article in print.

The design contest for a PCS logo will be announced at the Banff conference in September. We're also in the process of redesigning the pages of the *Newsletter,* and part of that effort will be an attempt to come up with a suitable new (read "shorter") name to replace *IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter*. The length of that official name places some severe constraints on our alterations of the masthead. Anyone who has ideas about a one- or two-word name for our redesigned, logofied newsletter is welcome to send me those suggestions.

—*D.E.N* ◀

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I always enjoy Cheryl Reimold's column. This issue's [July/August 1994] column, however, seems to have a bit of a test for the readers in it on the second page. I am including a copy with several typos circled. The first page had none that I could spot. I don't mean to write just to complain, but I thought you might want to look at this. Thanks for the work y'all do on this typically excellent newsletter. I read it more faithfully than I read the technical journals to which I subscribe.

—*David K. Lee*
  Raleigh, North Carolina

My apologies to David, Cheryl, and everyone else who receives the Newsletter. *Even my Mom mentioned typos on that page! There was a full page "hole" in the issue once it was typeset, and the second page of Cheryl's column was the late addition we used to fill that hole. Obviously, the page was type-side down on my desk (and I must have been asleep besides) when I proofread it. I've never been a great proofreader, but I know I can do better than that.—D.E.N.*

I was interested in Dexter Johnston's letter, and your editorial in response. I wonder whether you know of the proposal presented by M.D. Spivak (but for which he does *not* claim credit) in the book *The Joy of TeX*. He adopts a completely new pronoun, complete with inflections. The nominative case is E; the possessive is Eir (pronounced to rhyme with "their"), and the objective is Em. I don't quite see the point of capitalizing the cases other than nominative, but the general idea seems useful to me. What do you think?

—*George L. Trigg*

I had not heard of this particular suggestion, although there have been several others floating around for years. The "sound" of these replacement pronouns seems more acceptable to my ear than most of the others. The

question, of course, is how you go about gaining acceptance for them. Given the U.S. experience with metric measurement, there is clearly no easy way to produce a change in deeply entrenched habits, even if the change is logically desirable. As far as the capitalization is concerned, perhaps capping the Eir and Em is simply a way to prevent them from initially being seen as typos.—D.E.N. ◀

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Deborah Flaherty Kizer

This summer has certainly been a time for reflection for those of us involved with technology and its advancement. Twenty-five years ago, man took his first step on the moon. Twenty-five years ago, the Soviet Union was perceived as a threat to the United States. Twenty-five years ago, the notion of a notebook computer you could talk to existed only in the minds of technologists and science fiction buffs. And, the idea of "attending" a course being taught 3000 miles away was a stretch of the imagination.

Clearly, advances in technology have affected all our lives. For PCS, these changes have led to a broadening of our scope, new and evolving partnerships with other organizations, and increasing international growth and commitment. As an example, in the upcoming IPCC 94 agenda and the most recent conference Proceedings, you will see many topics such as international communication, team writing, etc.—topics that probably weren't even thought of twenty-five years ago. What is most exciting to me is that while our core mission has remained unchanged, as a society we are finding new and innovative ways to realize our mission. We have also come to recognize as a society that synergies can be attained by working and cooperating with other organizations. Our working with SIGDOC at IPCC 94 is just one example. Also, IEEE has approved PCS membership in INTECOM, an international communications organization. We continue to publish leading-edge IEEE Press books in our field. Our educational offerings continue to meet the needs of the marketplace and are evolving to reach new markets.

Our international membership growth continues to be strong, hence, we are working hard to address those members' needs. And, I recently received formal notification that the IEEE-PCS chapter in Russia has been established!

As communicators, we have a special opportunity, if not an obligation, to ensure that technology is understood. It is PCS' role to remain at the forefront of helping technologists communicate, exploring new techniques and technologies for doing so, and disseminating and sharing information with colleagues in other countries.

Your comments, thoughts, and suggestions on how we can improve PCS and remain poised for the future are welcome. Look for any AdCom member at IPCC 94, or feel free to write or call any AdCom member. I look forward to the next twenty-five years! ◄

IPCC 95: Smooth Sailing to the Future

Hyatt Regency Hotel—Savannah, Georgia—September 27-29, 1995

The International Professional Communication Conference (IPCC) invites you to submit a proposal for a paper, a workshop, or a panel presentation based on the conference themes. The IPCC is the Professional Communication Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc. (IEEE).

Conference Themes

Technology Applications	Research & Education	Innovations
• Hypertext	• Future technical curricula	• Team building
• Using electronic media	• Results of current research	• Building quality and usability
• New communication tools	• Using research results	• Improving communication
• Communication technology		
• Document accessibility		

Indicate clearly whether you are proposing a paper (send 200-400 word description), a workshop (send 100-300 word description of topic, hands-on activity, samples of materials or handouts), or a panel presentation (100-300 word description of the panel, names and addresses of all panel members, 100-300 word description of each paper). For each entry, please include a brief (75-100 word) biographical sketch with the proposal. Notification of acceptance will be mailed by February 15, 1995.
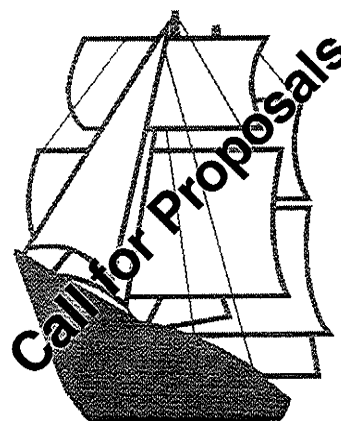
Send proposals by *January 15, 1995* to:
Roger Grice, Program Manager
52 Doris Lane
Lake Katrine, NY 12449 USA

PCS Russia Chapter
(continued from page 1)

ing the visit of Dr. Yuri Gornostaev (ICSTI) and myself to IPCC 91 in Orlando, Florida.

The opinion shared by all my colleagues is that the cooperation of our societies and our joint activities have already brought a number of fruitful results with mutual benefit. The IEEE PCS is highly regarded among Russian professional communicators. Since 1990, our societies have made great efforts in developing international communication. Russian communicators tried their best to contribute much in promoting the goals of the IEEE PCS in Russia and, in the long run, for the development of science and technology. We consider our cooperation as a very good instrument for bridging the world.

Since establishing our relationship, the activities of the Popov Society PCS have been directed to developing computer and information sciences and solving the problems of new information technology. With this approach in mind, let us look at the ideas and concepts of our joint activities.

Joint Ventures
During these years we have held joint meetings, workshops, and other events discussing problems of the profession.

• The conference "Information Centers and Technical Libraries: New Problems" (September 1990, Tallinn, Estonia) with four IEEE PCS AdCom members attending.

• The international colloquium "New Information Technology" (October 1991, Moscow) with a delegation of 10 IEEE PCS members from Canada, England, and the United States participating. This colloquium took place notwithstanding both the war in the Persian Gulf and the August 1991 coup in Moscow, thus show-

ing a significant example of the willingness and readiness of foreign and Russian professional communicators to get together and share information about problems in technical communication, hypertext technologies, information systems and databases, and information processing.

• Workshops on technical writing and speech led by Nancy Corbin and Ronald Blicq in 1990, 1991, and 1992 in Moscow and Tallinn. The books *Technically Speaking* by Corbin and *A Report Writer's Handbook* by Blicq were translated from English and published in Russian especially for those workshops.

Since 1990, our societies have made great efforts in developing international communication.

In addition to formal meetings such as these, there have been exchanges of delegations. The Russian Popov Society PCS delegation participated in IPCC 91 with myself as a keynote speaker. The Russian delegation visited a number of places of professional interest: the IBM Technical Education Center and the IBM Watson Research Center, Bellcore, AT&T, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the IEEE Service Center in Piscataway, and IEEE headquarters in New York. This visit helped greatly in establishing good contacts with many colleagues and made it possible for us to learn much about IEEE and PCS activities.

In May 1992, a PCS delegation at the annual Popov Society meeting in Moscow was led by Dr. Rudy Joenk, who presented papers on PCS organization and activities and on IBM information resources and multimedia tech-

nologies. The Russian Popov Society Board elected Dr. Joenk an Honorary Member of the Popov Society in recognition of his contribution to furthering international communication and understanding. A diploma was presented to him at the meeting. Dr. Joenk was also awarded the diploma of Honorary Member of the Association of Information Workers of Russia. Dr. Joenk is the first person from the West to be elected to this high grade of membership.

In June 1992, Dr. Michael Goodman attended the 2nd Russian Forum on "Electronic Communication Technologies of the 90s: The Future of Electronic Communication", where he presented a paper.

A set of papers appeared in the June 1994 issue (Vol. 37, No. 2) of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* in a special section on "Professional Communication in Russia". We consider this publication as a part of the rising interest within the world community about what is occurring in the field of professional communication in Russia, as well as interest in the social and market opportunities that will appear here in the future. These papers are another significant step toward furthering international communication.

Now there is interest from the Popov Society PCS to publish papers authored by IEEE PCS members in Russian professional journals (to be described in a later issue of the *Newsletter*).

Intersociety Agreement
A formal agreement on cooperation between the Professional Communication Section of the Russian Popov Society and the Professional Communication Society of the IEEE was worked out, approved by the PCS AdCom, and signed in English and Russian

versions in December 1993 (New York) and February 1994 (Moscow) by President Richard Robinson for IEEE PCS and by Chair Henrich Lantsberg for the Popov Society, respectively.

Our two societies agreed to encourage their members to submit papers for publication in the other's journals and newsletters; to participate in the other's conferences, colloquia, workshops, and other activities; and to create or use available means to recognize its members for service to the profession or to the other society. The agreement provides for the organization of joint conferences and other activities to promote mutual interest in technical communication.

Each society agreed to assist in arranging for delegations of the other organization to visit educational, scientific, and corporate organizations and communication facilities in the home country and in providing its members with possible contacts for exchanging views on theory, research, technology, and practical aspects of international technical communication. According to this agreement, the Popov Society PCS would assist and advise the IEEE PCS in its efforts to develop membership and establish a PCS Chapter in Russia (now accomplished).

Russia Chapter Activities

The following five activities are typical of those undertaken by the prospective members of the IEEE PCS Russia Chapter just prior to formation of the chapter. The Popov Society PCS, together with other organizations such as the International Center for Scientific and Technical Information (ICSTI) and the Association of Information Workers of Russia (AIWR), organized several conferences in 1994. These included:

• The 4th Russian International Forum on "Electronic Communication Technologies for the 90s" (June 1994, Moscow).

• A conference on municipal informatics: "Municipal Management, Forecasting, and Informatics" (June 1994).

• A conference on "Telecommunications and Education" (July 1994, Moscow).

• The "1994 East-West International Conference on Human Computer Interaction" (August 1994, St. Petersburg), with participants from 16 countries.

• Russian communicators participated in preparation and working out projects on state laws for scientific-technical information resources.

IEEE Region 8 (Europe, Africa, and Middle East), working closely with the IEEE technical societies, is developing a policy of assisting engineers working in the electrical, electronic, computer, and software fields in the states of the former USSR. According to this policy, Region 8 provides the engineers in those countries with IEEE technical publications and literature free of charge. Since the policy is intended primarily to help IEEE members, our chapter provided a survey of Russian libraries for receiving this literature.

Members of the chapter took part in preparing and publishing a newspaper, *Science and Technology in Russia* (in Russian and English versions).

The IEEE PCS Russia Chapter, in cooperation with other organizations, including the State Committee on information policy under the President of Russia, the AIWR, and the Institute for Training Information Specialists, organized a monthly workshop on the problems of theoretical informatics that is very popular and

well attended by leading scientists and engineers in the field of computer and information sciences.

Now the Chapter is preparing for a September visit to Moscow of IEEE leaders—1994 IEEE President Dr. H. Troy Nagle, IEEE President-Elect Dr. Thomas Cain, and IEEE Vice President for Technical Activities Dr. Donald Bolle—and Region 8 officers after the meeting of the IEEE Executive Committee in Budapest. The program of the visit includes a roundtable discussion with the Popov Society Board and members of the IEEE Russia Section and Chapters. We'll discuss problems of mutual Popov Society and IEEE interest and the possibility of opening an IEEE office in Moscow, as well as efforts to open more IEEE sections in Russia.

The Russian Popov Society, the IEEE Russia Section, IEEE Region 8, and the IEEE Communications Society have organized (for this October in Moscow) an international conference on satellite communications which will explore "Satellite Communications That Unite Nations". Among the topics is satellite-based personal communication systems (e-mail, video conferences, computer networks, access to remote databases, and banks).

These activities are good evidence of the effective fulfillment of our intersociety agreement.

1995 Conference

Now I want to share with you our near-term plans. The main event will be the commemoration of 1995 as the centenary year of radio, to pay tribute to both Guglielmo Marconi (Italy) and Alexander Popov (Russia) who, by their work, began the practical application of radio. This event will be held in May 1995 in Moscow, organized by the Russian Popov Society under the auspices

of the Russian government and UNESCO.

There will be also an international conference, "Centenary of Using Electromagnetic Waves for the Transmission of Information—The Birth of Modern Radioengineering".

These events will take place along with the 50th annual Russian Popov Society meeting (the 50th anniversary of the Popov Society creation), where the Professional Communication Section will have its own session. **IEEE PCS members are invited to take part in these events.** Further information will appear in the November *Newsletter.*

Conclusion

I assure the IEEE PCS members that you have among your colleagues many sincere friends in Russia who want to cooperate with your respected society for the sake of friendship and peace. I look forward with great optimism to strengthening our further cooperation.

I thank PCS members Rudy Joenk, David Kemp, and William Kehoe for their efforts and constant support during the formation of the PCS Russia Chapter; Scott Sanders and Mike Markel for their excellent work in preparing and publishing a series of Russian articles in the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication;* and David Kemp and David Nadziejka for persuading me to write this article for the *Newsletter.*

I express my special thanks and acknowledgments to the present and past IEEE PCS Presidents Deborah Flaherty Kizer, Richard Robinson, and Rudy Joenk, as well as to my good friends Nancy Corbin, Ron Blicq, and Michael Goodman, for the lasting and invaluable help, support, and friendship I have felt during all stages of our cooperation. They were always available to offer much needed and appreciated advice. I also thank all the PCS members whom I have met and

who were involved in our interactions.

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Dr. Lantsberg is Chair of the Professional Communication Section of the Russian Popov Society, Vice Chair of the IEEE Russia Section, Chair of the IEEE PCS Russia Chapter, and a Senior Member of the IEEE.

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Note added in proof: Dr. Lantsberg has presented a personally modest accounting of the Russia Chapter. From the beginning (1990) he was a catalyst and prime mover for these activities. Although IEEE PCS had previously held conferences in Canada and England, Henrich helped us truly move into the international arena. He received a special award from us at IPCC 91 and he, too, in 1992, was made an Honorary Member of the Popov Society and of the AIWR, for his efforts in creating and furthering international technical communication and cooperation. In Russia, honorary membership is as prestigious for society members as it is for nonmembers.—Rudy Joenk ◀

Worth Reading

Max, D.T. The end of the book? *Atlantic Monthly* 274(3): 61–71 (September 1994). An intriguing discussion of whether electronic media will really replace the book.

Kleiner, K. What a tangled Web they wove . . . *New Scientist* 143: 35–39 (30 July 1994). A brief history of the hypertext medium called the World-Wide Web, the access programs to it, and how indexing and retrieval problems may be solved in the future.

Lesk, M.E. Electronic chemical journals. *Analytical Chemistry* 66(14): 747–755 (15 July

1994). A discussion of an experiment to make 20 chemical journals available in both image and text formats on a desktop computer. Described are the process of putting these journals into an appropriate electronic form for desktop display, the electronic interfaces used, and a comparison of information searches using the electronic and paper journals.

Seven thinkers in search of an information highway. *Technology Review* 97(6): 42–52 (August/September 1994). Seven panelists representing business, academia, government, nonprofits, and the press discuss the problems and

prospects of the information highway, what it is, where it will lead, and how it will get there. Two of the panelists were Michael Kapor, founder of Lotus Development Corporation, and Michael Dertouzos, Director of the Laboratory for Computer Science at MIT.

Fishlock, D. Working live wires. *New Scientist* 143: 23–25 (30 July 1994). An article to make your hair stand on end. A conducting suit of heavy fabric containing metal fibers provides a mobile Faraday cage, allowing the wearer to work directly on wires carrying hundreds of thousands of volts. ◀

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Conference on Corporate Communication

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- ❏ Crisis Communication
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- ❏ Advertising and Corporate Identity

PLAN NOW TO PARTICIPATE!

To present a paper, propose a session, lead a workshop, or take part in a panel discussion, write a 300-500 word abstract of your paper or summary of your idea. Send it by *November 1, 1994* to:

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On Writing

by Sally B. Kmetz

Using his finger as a stylus, a Paleolithic hunter traces a delicate filigree in the dust, indicating to his companions the probable route of prey; nearly twenty-two thousand years ago, on a cave wall at Lascaux, France, a primal Picasso carefully depicts the bull he tracks. These are the forerunners of writing, that now characteristically human act. "Although human beings have been living and dying for a million years," states Rene Etiemble, "they have been writing for only six thousand years." Three thousand years ago, Phoenicians used the first known alphabet, writing signs that represented the sounds of spoken language.

Initially, writing was solely the domain of church and state; writing was a powerful and, to the uninitiated, an almost mystical method of keeping the books, of documenting sacred and secular law, of tracking tribute paid on crops. But after a long time, writing became a more universally practiced skill; it began to be used to record the thoughts and feelings of peasantry and peerage alike. We write to know and to pass along that knowledge. Scholars have studied the creative process involved in producing the written word, and the process of literary creation remains the scholar's primary focus. How do the words in our heads become words on paper? When essayists write about writing, they, too, concentrate on the intellectual exercise.

But it is the physical, not the mental, considerations of writing that intrigue me; pen and paper choices, not just word choices, fascinate. Studying only the intellectual component involved diminishes the important implications of the physical act of writing itself. Words flow through fingers, fine-tuning the body/soul connection, and ears, in addition to propping our glasses and giving us our sense of hearing, provide a shelf for pencil storage. While the physical act of writing may be a step-child to the creative act, the physical is nevertheless a necessary (if not sufficient) component of writing.

Writing occupies a material world as well as a mental one. Writers, like pipe smokers who carry tobacco pouches, long matches, tampers, and reamers, derive pleasure from dealing

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Writing occupies a material world as well as a mental one.

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with the equipment involved in writing. It is a writer's equipment, as well as his words, that characterize his personality.

For one who settles in to write by hand, the most basic choice is made between pencil and pen, each an instrument of ancient lineage. Christian monks in the ninth century were given pencils, but they used goose quill pens, with nibs shaped by a "penknife", to copy holy texts. Commandeering the Europeans' reputation for producing quality pencils, Henry David Thoreau's family cornered the drawing pencil market in the United States when they learned how to manufacture a pencil with a lead soft enough to mark a dark line, but strong enough not to break under the pressure of writing. Later, attachment of an eraser married form and function.

A newly sharpened pencil has the slightly sweet, slightly acrid fragrance of wood, freshly planed. Found in backpack and purse, they are useful and used to the nub. Pencils grace our first wobbly attempts at writing and accompany us on our journeys through the fearsome hazards of standardized tests. Pencils are simply perfect, although their wielders are not. With an eraser's brazen presence atop functional column, a pencil reminds us of man's imperfect ability; those who write with a pencil have a tolerance for error, a respect for life's ambiguities.

Mechanical pencils challenged the supremacy of the wood pencil. Technological advances made early Scriptos, with their fat erasers and their spiraling, lead-filled intestine, look like some transparent, larval mutant. Today's high-tech pencils sport rubberized barrels and gnurled metal grips. Progress, however, brings mixed results. Increasingly refined, 0.3-mm leads pick paper and break as easily as the pre-Thoreauvian pencil. Eversharp, at least until the lead reservoir runs dry, mechanical pencils have become complex creatures, sleek and unpredictable thoroughbreds requiring the sure hand of draftsman or engineer. Always subject to change without notice, this pencil is fickle.

Perhaps, as a perfectionist, you prefer ink. Ink is for those who never make mistakes, for those who never change their minds. Those who choose ink as their writing medium today luxuriate amid myriad delivery systems,

none of which, it seems, is the archaic quill. Fountain pens, ballpoints, and a modern hybrid, the roller-ball, flourish in the hands of the supremely self-confident.

Ink requires deliberation. Do you need the indelibility of permanent ink or is a washable ink sufficient for your purposes? Which color will you choose? If you are Georgia Boothby, seventh-grade English teacher, you wear a starched white blouse tautly tucked into the waistband of a rustling taffeta skirt and you write your graceful hand in distinctive purple. If you are a long-ago thirteen-year-old girl, you make your daily diary entry in bright peacock blue. Do you want the ebony required by formal signatures and accountants recording credit, or the carmine that records the contradiction of celebratory red-letter days and the mean scratch of debt?

A fountain pen, like a smoker's pipe, is for those whose hands move restlessly among the many accessories required to keep this fitful implement functioning. Fountain pens demand pen wipes and sanders or blotters to prevent the smear of the pen's life-blood. Before the years of plastic cartridges filled with liquid blue or black, ink came in glass bottles that had convenient wells side-mounted within. The pens themselves were equipped with a diaphragm or a proboscis, eerily animal-like organs used to suck the ink into a holding chamber. When in the filling process the well ran dry, the pen produced a satisfied slurp, sounding much like a six-year-old polishing off the last drops of a chocolate malt.

But fountain pen ink ebbs and flows on unpredictable tides, operates under the exasperating influence of some undiscovered moon. Skipping first strokes, cooperating reluctantly, the pen itself sometimes suffers from writer's block, and the angle of attack remains a formidable obstacle; and as a loyal subject of the laws of gravity, the ink steadfastly refuses to flow uphill.

Despite their curious mix of challenging and endearing qualities, fountain pens frequently remain the choice of those who care about the physical act of writing. The pen stroke, with its varying widths, lends character to the words on the page; over time, the point conforms to the writer's hand and becomes an integral part of the writing

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Learning to write is a rite of passage.

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process. A bold signature flowing from a broad nib asserts its authority, as the delicate line drawn from a fine nib suggests a cultured elegance. It is for the ritual connection that develops between writer and stylus that I do not want you to use my fountain pen, just as I do not want you to use my toothbrush.

The ballpoint pen, abomination to aficionados of the fountain pen, made its debut in 1940. Early models were expensive and shared a common fault— intermittent ink flow. But where the spitting, sputtering mark left by a fountain pen's liquid ink retains a certain feathery grace, the blot left by the sticky paste ink of a ballpoint resembles a mashed gnat. Of course, time's passage has refined the ballpoint, and today's version, with its dependable delivery of ink and negligible price (it's frequently a freebie), threatens to

usurp the pencil's time-honored ubiquity. But a ballpoint pen lacks the fountain pen's empathetic response to writer, reflecting its expendability in the script produced. Its homogenous quality mirrors neither the instrument nor the human who uses it.

The roller-ball, hybrid of fountain pen and ballpoint, skated onto the scene in 1980. Sounding like a sporting event for testosterone-charged adolescents, the roller-ball combines the pleasure of liquid ink with a ballpoint's ease of use. Yet mechanical concerns governing ink delivery restrict the stroke width to a range somewhere between medium and "micro", and its fixed ball still limits expressiveness. A further development is the Fisher Space Pen (high-tech offspring of the ballpoint) with its own pressurized ink supply that allows it to be used in the weightlessness of space. Despite these innovations, writing is still ritual. Certainly, no one is more aware of its power and mystique than is a youngster struggling to master the technique. Writing is half the accomplishment of literacy; learning to write is a rite of passage. As the novices bow over their ceremonial duties, chunky pencils slip in small hands; wide-lined Big Chief tablets wrinkle in testimony to sweaty concentration. All this hunched intensity produces the glowing pride of printing one's name in block letters. "Script" is the word they whisper, like incantation. Culturally, writing implements mark other rites of passage, as well. Number two pencils accompany hopeful takers of standardized tests. Pens are given to honor graduates and to sponsors of legislation signed by the President. Elaborate desksets commemo-

rate promotions. The Supreme Court bestows a hand-cut, white goose quill pen on those who argue a case before it.

Our world increasingly relies on the personal computer, cellular phone, and facsimile for communication, technologies that distance us from the physical act of writing. I ask, When do we write? When do we put pencil or pen to paper? We write thank you notes to grandmothers, letters of condolence, and love notes.

Writing matters. Writing, as a physical act, reminds us of our humanity, keeps us humane.

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Sally Kmetz is a graduate student in the Department of English at the University of New Mexico. ◀

. . . bell must be isothermal, for otherwise the resident engineers and physical chemists (of which there must be some) could set up a heat engine to run a refrigerator to cool off a portion of their surroundings to any desired temperature.

Henry Albert Bent

as quoted in
Harvest of a Quiet Eye,
A.L. Mackay, 1977.

CALL FOR PAPERS

An International Conference to Commemorate 1995 as the Year of Radio

Centenary of using Electromagnetic Waves for the Transmission of Information—the Birth of Modern Radioengineering

The 50th Annual
Russian Popov Society Meeting
(and the 50th anniversary of the Popov Society's creation)

May 4 - 6, 1995 • Moscow, Russia

The events are organized by the Russian Popov Society under the auspices of the Russian government and UNESCO. The general chair of the conference and the annual meeting is Professor Yuri Gulyaev, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences; President of the Russian Popov Society; Chair, IEEE Russia Section.

The topics to be discussed include problems in the history of radio; contribution of scientists and engineers to its progress; the role of radioengineering, electronics, and communications for the world community; and the state of the art in modern radioelectronics.

The conference and the meeting will be organized in plenary and section sessions. The sessions are as follows:

> Acousto-electronics and acousto-optics
> Automatic communication and communication networks
> General radioengineering
> Information theory
> Measurements in radioengineering and electronics
> Micro- and nanoelectronics
> Microwave electronics
> Multichannel electrical communication
> Electronics in medicine
> PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION
> Radiowave propagation
> Receivers and amplifiers
> Synchronization devices
> Television
> Theory and techniques for discrete signal transmission
> Problems of SETI (search for extraterrestrial intelligence)

The deadline for submission of abstracts (2 - 3 pages) is January 15, 1995. Time for presentation: plenary session, 30 minutes; section session, 20 minutes.

The languages of the conference and meeting are Russian and English. IEEE PCS members are invited to take part in these events.

The address of the National Organizing Committee is: Russian Popov Society, Kuznetsky Most 20/6, 103897, GSP, Moscow K-31, Russia. Phone: (7 095) 203-49-85 or (7 095) 925-41-55; Fax: (7 095) 925-93-98; E-mail: hlants@ire.uucp.free.net or h.lantsberg@ieee.org

CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

by Joan G. Nagle

Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

Now wait. Things are getting out of hand here. As editor of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication,* I once received a six-page article that contained 185 references to other publications.

That's right; more than 30 per page. On the other hand, I once served as a judge of sermons submitted for possible radio broadcast on "The Protestant Hour". Some were good, many were awful, but one of the best somehow had a familiar ring to it. When I got home (I was listening to candidate tapes while on a business trip; the other residents of the motel got a free uplift if they were eavesdropping!), I checked out my suspicion by playing another tape in my possession. This was a sermon given by a bishop of the church at its quadrennial general conference—certainly no hole-in-the-wall presentation.

I was right. The submitted sermon was, or at least a third of it was, practically a word-for-word copy of the bishop's address. The title of one was "Why Aren't We Dancing?" and the other "Why Aren't We Singing?" (I no longer remember which was which.)

Appalled, I contacted the committee chair to report this egregious plagiarism. And was surprised to find that he wasn't nearly as appalled as I. "Oh, preachers do this all the time," he said. "But of course we can't put the thing on the air. That would be going too far. We'll just set it aside."

Preachers do this all the time? *This,* my friend, is stealing. People in my line of work don't do *this* all the time, or they'd soon be out of work (if caught).

And what is "going too far"? If the spectrum goes from 30 references per page, at one end, to no credit at all, at the other end, where is the acceptable middle ground?

I suspect the law is somewhat murky here (as elsewhere). One might be able to defend, in court, a "borrowing" that changed the operative verb in a series of paragraphs or pages but—ethically— it's still copying from one's neighbor's paper.

If the spectrum goes from 30 references per page to no credit at all, where is the acceptable middle ground?

Maybe writers are supersensitive on this subject. If I make my living by creative endeavors, those who help themselves to the results without paying are stealing bucks from me just as surely as if they shoplifted merchandise from my store.

I know I was once the only person in a singing group who objected to wholesale reproduction of pieces of music, to save buying enough copies for every singer. Besides the fact that I was afraid of ending up in the slammer, this just wasn't right. The

renowned social theorist, mathematician, and nightclub entertainer Tom Lehrer wrote a song entitled "Research".[1] In it, he said that "the great Lobachevsky" had, in one word, taught him the secret of research: plagiarize. "Let no one else's work evade your eyes." (Yes, it rhymes.)

Do scientists do *this* all the time too?

Again, where is the middle ground? If we're talking ethics here (and I certainly am not capable of talking law), we must make ethical judgments. When I write, for instance, that every paragraph should have a topic sentence, I am probably quoting someone who said that before me. But it's a commonly accepted dictum, which I consider to be in the public domain. When I copy, word for word, the paragraph that a previous writer used to illustrate this guideline, however, I am a thief.

Unless, of course, I give this guy credit in a reference or footnote. And unless, if this is a commercially published work, I get permission from the publisher to quote it.

We can rarely write a scientific or technical document without crediting other researchers, theorists, reporters. It makes for some trouble, of course, looking up the publisher and date of publication, inserting footnotes, formatting bibliographies. But it's a do-unto-others thing: I won't pilfer your work if you leave mine alone.

But 185 references in six pages? Did this writer have *anything* original to say?

Watch for a future column on what is "a thing to say" in this context.

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[1] Lehrer, Tom, "Lobachevsky," *Too Many Songs by Tom Lehrer,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1981 ◄

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

by Cheryl Reimold

A - C - T   N - O - W, A Six-Step Response to Disaster: Part I

In 1979, the nuclear power plant malfunction at Three Mile Island spread into a meltdown for the entire industry. In 1984, the tragedy at Bhopal left Union Carbide reeling. Common to both disasters was *striking miscommunication to the public.* When the local utility involved in Three Mile Island did not offer an immediate response, rumors and fears mushroomed, and the clouds remained. And when Union Carbide blamed Bhopal on local management, *The New York Times* publicly lambasted "Union Carbide's defensive posture and faceless approach."

Of course, a catastrophe has disastrous consequences no matter what. But the way a company communicates the crisis to the world does affect public perception of the company and, on occasion, the industry as a whole. Witness the positive public perception of two companies that responded immediately and generously to crises: Johnson & Johnson (the Tylenol scare) and Hyatt Regency (a fatal skywalk collapse in Kansas City).

Because a crisis by nature catches people to some extent unprepared, crisis planning and *a communication strategy* must be firmly in place to guide those involved through the rough, uncharted waters. In this series of columns, I will discuss an effective crisis communication strategy, A-C-T N-O-W.

A = Anticipate disaster

If you take this first step, you will be able to do the other five if need arises. If you don't take it, you will find the rest of the strategy much more difficult—maybe even impossible.

This step has three parts: doing a crisis inventory, building good public and press relations *before* a crisis, and doing contingency planning for a crisis. We'll look at each part later in this column.

C = Care about people affected

What angered the public most in the majority of badly handled crises was the companies' apparent lack of compassion. By contrast, companies that sought to help those hurt first and continued to prove their concern received public approval.

Next time, we'll look at ways to find out what people need to know, to disseminate helpful information, and to show you care in ways that matter.

T = Tell what you know immediately

To stop false rumors and poor public perception, you must speak quickly. If you don't, someone else will—probably someone who has less information than you have.

In upcoming columns, we will see what information to get immediately, where and how to get it, where to tell it, and what attitudes and questions to anticipate.

N = Note your next steps

After your immediate response to the crisis, you can retreat briefly to prepare for a longer communication program. We will see how and where to organize centers of information, which experts to call for information and advice, whom to draw in to form a crisis team, what to prepare for lengthy interviews or questions, how to get on the air to give your information, and what types of written information you may wish to disseminate.

O = Offer help to reinforcements

Thank the people who are helping you in your crisis. You owe it to them—and they will in turn be grateful for your recognition and be more eager to help. We will consider effective ways to organize relief efforts and to write letters, faxes, and telegrams to public officers, police, and others.

W = Write press kits and other pieces of public information

You will need to write, edit, or oversee press kits, press releases, letters, background articles, and other written pieces for public dissemination. Your writing must be sincere, timely, and factual, or the public will look elsewhere for information. We will see how to make your writing effective.

You can handle a crisis and you may well be able to avoid one—if you act now.

Step 1: Anticipate disaster

In "Control Your Crisis" (*Reader's Digest,* July 1992), Reynolds Dodson takes a tip from masters of crisis management. He quotes Captain Fred Crocker of the Hartford, Connecticut, Fire Department: "People who have prepared for a fire are much more likely to survive than those who haven't." Planning for a crisis may save your company's life.

Do a crisis inventory. If you have a safety committee, you might ask members to make a crisis inventory their next job. Otherwise, form a team yourself. Ask one person from each area of work to do a crisis inventory for his or her operation. Here is an efficient way to perform the inventory.

Begin by preparing a sheet of paper with three columns: *What Could Go Wrong, How to Avoid It,* and *If It Happens.* Now, look at everything in your operation, from a desktop computer to a pulp and paper mill recovery furnace, and give it a worst-case scenario. What do you handle or manage that could break, fall, explode, leak, be tampered with, fall into the wrong hands, or otherwise cause harm? Note *all* your observations in your first column; criticize none.

Planning for a crisis may save your company's life.

Next, take each possible disaster you noted and ask, "What could we do to prevent this?" Are all safety measures in place? If so, note them in column two with a check mark and date. Can more be done to avert a problem? Note ideas in column two, with a date planned for attention. Finally, for each potential hazard ask, "What should we do if it occurs?" Consult with everyone involved to draw up a plan. Remember, it is much easier to think clearly, logically, and creatively when you're not in catastrophe. Note your thoughts in column three.

Set a date for completion of crisis inventories. Then, gather them into a single document

which you update at intervals appropriate to the equipment involved.

Do contingency planning. For each possible crisis, answer these questions:

What can we do to avoid the most damage?

What must we know?

What decisions must I make? Who else must make decisions?

Whom must we contact?

What does the public need to know immediately? How can I get this information?

What resources do we require? Where can we get them?

What emergency supplies do we need? Do we have them available? Where?

What first-aid training do we have? Who can do CPR and other life-saving procedures?

To get some answers, you may need to involve experts. If so, you're much wiser to do so now than to try to grab pieces of information when everyone is in a panic.

Next, play out a crisis. Go back to the third column of your inventory, *If It Happens,* and put your plan into action. This is the only way to see if the plan works and to give people a chance to practice in tranquility what they may need to do in danger. Training games can save lives.

Build good press and public relations *now*. The very nature of a crisis is its unpredictability; it could happen tomorrow, next year, or never. Begin today to cultivate your local media. Let them know regularly of events of public interest sponsored by your company. Invite them to attend. Find out who the appropriate reporters and newscasters are and invite them to company events or special days at your plant. Send them copies of quarterly reports and other publications of general interest.

If you have a public relations office, check that they are taking these actions; if not, appoint a media representative or—yes!—do it yourself. If disaster should strike, the media will get the message out to the world. Building good relations now can help you get the good will as well as the air time and space you will need then.

Cheryl Reimold is a member of the PCS Administrative Committee and the author of more than 200 articles and several books, including How to Write a Million-Dollar Memo, Being a Boss, *and* The Language of Business. *She is President of PERC Communications—6A Dickel Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583; (914) 725-1024—which offers businesses in-house workshops and courses in writing, presentations, and on-the-job communication skills.* ◀

The Five Elements of Successful Technical Presentations

by Frederick Gilbert, Ph.D.

Steve Johnson is about to make a presentation to an overflow crowd in a large corporate board room. Steve has a Ph.D. in physics from an Ivy League school and is a world-class expert in fiber optics. He is the author of numerous scientific articles in this area and he holds two patents. Six months ago, senior management approved the funding of his project. Steve's goal is to get continued funding, more computer power, and approval to hire three more engineers.

Steve is excited about presenting the progress his team has made in the development of fiber-optic transceivers that will dramatically reduce the costs of high-speed, multimedia networks. He walks to the front of the board room with an armload of detailed overhead transparencies. The overhead projector is already on. The bright light on the screen dominates the front of the room.

Steve looks out nervously and sees an audience of technical colleagues, dressed in jeans, mixed with senior management and people from marketing, all dressed in shirts and ties. Steve says, "Good morning," and then puts up the first of many black-and-white, hard-to-read overheads. He apologizes to the group: "I know you can't see this from where you're sitting . . ." He faces the screen and begins reading the overheads. Ten minutes later, his peers are still interested in the exquisite technical detail he is discussing. Unfortunately, because he is facing the screen, Steve fails to notice that the CEO and his staff are shifting in their chairs and have become bored.

Steve did not receive the funding he wanted. His project came to an end a few months later. His story has been repeated many times in high-tech environments, and so has the outcome: stagnating careers and missed product opportunities.

Technical presentation issues

The life or death of a new product often depends on a technical presentation. The presentation skills of technical people are therefore critical to new product development. Yet technical personnel are usually not well trained in presentation skills.

Last year, we did an in-depth survey with technical presenters and technical managers to see what they needed. We interviewed 27 engineers and scientists from a broad range of high-tech companies, who were asked to comment on what they needed to improve their own technical presentations and to reflect on technical presentations in general. Their concerns were in five basic areas:

1. Analyzing the audience and their needs

2. Conveying the meaning of the data

3. Using visual aids effectively

4. Understanding the different types of technical presentations and their objectives

5. Giving impromptu presenttions

Audience analysis

The technical presenter needs a sound understanding of who is in the audience and what they want. This is what Steve failed to have. He wanted to let his peers know the details of the project but didn't know how to present the project's business potential to management. This error cost him dearly. Audience analysis takes time but pays big dividends. Here are some things you can do.

Before the meeting. If you are not sure who your audience will be, these steps will help.

• Review the meeting agenda and objectives for clues about what attendees are looking for.

• Contact the meeting organizer and/or attendees in advance and ask them about their expectations.

• Meet with a senior person from another department—let's say, sales and marketing—and learn about their interests and what they would like to hear about.

• Prepare backup material and slides in case the discussion gets into related areas that were not on the agenda.

During the meeting. If you are not able to accomplish these steps before the meeting, here are some real-time, in-meeting strategies.

• Talk with people as they enter the room and explore with them briefly what their goals are for the meeting.

• Begin your presentation with a quick audience survey. For example, "How many of you are specifically interested in the results of our code review on release 3.0 of our new ABC software package? Let me see a show of hands." A follow-up question could be, "How many are primarily interested in seeing our marketing data and positioning strategy relative to the competition?" This survey will help you decide which direction to take.

• Be aware of audience nonverbal feedback and be prepared to change directions. If it is clear they do not like what you are presenting, stop your presentation and ask them directly what they would rather hear about. This is a gutsy and dramatic strategy, but it can breathe new life into a dying presentation.

The meaning of the data

Technical personnel are trained to be objective. It is sometimes hard for them to take a position on the information they present; it seems too much like "selling". However, in our survey, technical mangers were clear in their need to have presenters take a position. As one put it, "Don't just tell me how you got the data, tell me what the data means." In other words, don't be so objective.

Technical presenters need to identify what the core message of the presentation is and repeat it a number of times during the talk. Repetition helps the audience to stay focused and to remember the core message at the end. Examples of memorable core messages:

• Design process: "Testability is a critical part of IC design."

• Quality: "Quality is our competitive advantage in the 90s."

• Commitment: "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."— Thomas A. Edison

Visual aids

It's easy to believe that the technical talk is the visuals, but our survey respondents were clear about this: use visuals as an aid to the talk, not as the talk itself. The presenter is always more important than the visuals. Technical talks are about human communication, which is hard to do when the speaker is reading words and numbers off a screen.

Handouts. The most popular visuals, according to a study reported in *Communication Briefings*, are handouts. They assure the presenter that people will leave the meeting with all the technical detail, but the presenter will not have to cover it all from the front of the room. In addition, including copies of the visuals allows people to pay more attention to the presenter and not worry so much about taking notes.

Computer-generated visuals. To bring up visual data directly from a computer, some presenters have started using liquid-crystal display (LCD) panels in conjunction with overhead projectors (multimedia). For talks that require complex layering effects, movement, or video and sound, this can be a real plus.

The presenter is always more important than the visuals.

The drawbacks are poor image quality, the lights must be dimmed or turned off, and the presenter sits at a keyboard typing commands in the dark (a formula for curing insomnia).

Computer-video interface. The solution to these problems may be in a new technology that translates computer information into a video signal that allows it to be shown on a television monitor. The lights in the room stay on, and the cost is about one-tenth that of LCD hardware. The drawback is that even a large TV screen is limited to a group size of twenty to thirty. The overwhelming benefit is that the speaker can be seen. (For a large groups of a hundred or more— like at a technical conference—a video projection unit can be used

with a full-sized screen.) An infrared remote control can also be used so the speaker is not "tied" to the mouse or keyboard.

Types of technical presentations

Across diverse types of technical presentations, audiences vary, goals are different, and the challenges are unique. Our survey revealed at least six basic types of technical talks.

• Technical proposal: The audience includes senior management, the goal is to get funded, and the challenge is to not make it so technical that you exclude a business focus.

• Technical update: The audience is management and technical peers. The goal is to communicate project status.

• Checkpoint presentation: Again, management and technical peers are the audience. The goal is a "go/no go" decision, and the challenge is to avoid project cancellation.

• Pre-sale customer presentation: The audience is customer management and technical personnel. The presentation is about information and persuasion, with the goal of making a sale.

• Post-sale support presentation: Customer technical personnel are the audience. The goal is status review, problem resolution, and customer satisfaction.

• Technical convention paper: The audience is technical peers, and the goal is to communicate information and perhaps to gain visibility in the field.

When a presenter understands the array of goals and challenges for these different talks, suddenly the depth of technical material presented, the types of visuals used, and even the closing recommendations become much clearer. Steve, the expert on fiber optics,

was doing a checkpoint presentation with a singular goal: a go or no-go decision. He pitched it to his technical peers and failed to take into account the needs of senior management.

Impromptu presentations

Technical presenters may be asked to discuss their work in a meeting on an impromptu basis, with no time to prepare. Or, a person's manager will toss a stack of overheads on the desk and say, "Will you do this talk for me in twenty minutes? Something came up and I can't make it."

One effective approach to this challenge is the "PREP" model. PREP is an acronym for Position, Reasons, Evidence, Position. Begin by stating your position on the issue. Next move on to why you feel that way, then give your evidence (data or an anecdote), and wrap up by restating your position. The power of this model is in the repetition of the core message at the beginning and at the end, with supporting evidence in the middle. The PREP strategy will help the unprepared speaker seem knowledgeable and confident.

Summary

If you do technical presentations, keep in mind the five critical elements that emerged from our survey. They may be the difference between product success and product failure.

Frederick Gilbert is the principal of Frederick Gilbert Associates, Inc., of Redwood City, California. ◀

Newsletter Schedule

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Issue	Deadline
Nov./Dec.	7 October 1994
Jan./Feb.	2 December 1994
March/April	3 February 1995
May/June	7 April 1995
July/August	2 June 1995

Contributions are welcome; ASCII e-mail and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred. Please send them to:

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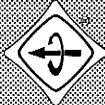
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