Call for Papers: A Special Issue of *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communicat*io**n**

Manuscripts Due: March 1, 2026

Title: Why Are We Here? (Re)Establishing the Value of PTC

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Description

Throughout its history as a field of study, Professional and Technical Communication (PTC) scholars have sought to define technical and/or professional communication [1]; document its history [2]; establish its subject matter [3]; understand its role in the workplace [4]; contribute pedagogical theory and research on program design [5], [6]; and examine it from a social perspective [7], [8]. Examining PTC from these different scholarly perspectives reflects the evolution of PTC and what value the field has contributed throughout the decades.

Communicating this value within industry has looked different throughout the years as technology has developed and influenced the nature of communication—prompting PTC scholars to study how our value can be measured, redefined, and articulated within the workplace. Redish [9] contributed an understanding of value added and how the value of technical communicators can be calculated and measured. Redish argued that PTC must be able to provide hard data "to show the value that you add as a technical communicator" [p. 515]. For decades, the field developed approaches for assessing quality and demonstrating value, but Carliner [10] argued that we lacked a cohesive framework for articulating the quality and value of products and services. Carliner provided a "framework to assess the effectiveness and value of technical communication products" and use it to influence perceptions of the value of technical communication products [p. 253].

Our attempt to define PTC has also reflected the social and economic shifts and perceptions of what technical communicators do. Johnson-Eilola [11] contributed a way of understanding the value of PTC in terms of "symbolic-analytic work" by relocating value to the post-industrial age of information spaces and communication. Henning and Bemer [12] examined the *Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook*'s definition of technical communicator and argued that we should revise and enlarge our definition of technical communication because "an articulation of what technical communicators do can grant the field power in presenting a united front to employers with respect to the value technical communicators bring to the workplace" [p. 311]. Petersen's [13] study of the conditions and perception of value of technical communicators in the workplace revealed that articulating the value of technical and professional communication (TPC) is an "ongoing process, particularly for practitioners, who have found ways to combat stereotypes. TPC must continue to make visible its value, or problems of misconceptions, stereotypes, and devaluation will persist" [p. 211].

Most recently, the launch of generative AI has prompted an immediate need to defend and strategize the future role of professional and technical communicators in industry [14]. Skimming the recent headlines of *Inside Higher Education* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* highlights how higher education is also experiencing its own challenges in the current technological and socio-political climate. The profession is internalizing student concerns

regarding the expense of a higher education, the value of a college degree, and what degrees are perceived as valuable for what types of future employment [15], [16], [17]. The current technological and socio-political climate has further disrupted and challenged perceptions of PTC, and our research into practice and pedagogy must (re)establish the value of PTC to students, within the university, and in industry.

Therefore, this special issue of *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* seeks to examine how we establish, demonstrate, and articulate the value of PTC in academic and industry settings in our current landscape. For this issue, we are looking for examples of research into what academic programs and practitioners are doing to address this question and establish value. We are interested in submissions related, but not limited, to the following questions:

- What is the current value of PTC in business, industry, and/or academia?
- How is the value of PTC in business, industry, and/or the academy defined and conveyed? To whom?
- How do various communication technologies, including but not limited to generative AI, impact the value of PTC?
- How or can we influence the perception of the value of PTC? Of a PTC degree?
- What does industry value in graduates of a PTC program?
- How do we align academic programs with the needs of industry?
- How can we understand the connections between academia and industry?
- How is value communicated in recruiting potential students to PTC programs?
- How do we ensure students find value in their degree experience?
- What rationale drives academic PTC program design and course offerings?
- How are assessments designed to reflect the value of academic PTC program design, curriculum, and student success?
- What is the value of workplace pedagogy and/or instructional design within business and industry?
- How are assessments designed to reflect the value and success of professional and industrial PTC programs?

Types of Projects

The types of research projects accepted for this special issue include but are not limited to:

- Research articles
- Integrative literature reviews
- Case studies
- Teaching cases
- Tutorials

If you would like to submit a genre beyond *Transactions'* five major types of articles, please contact the special guest editors to discuss your ideas (tcportewig@arizona.edu, rrodrigo@arizona.edu).

Special Issue Timeline

- **3/1/26:** Submission of full article
- **6/1/26:** Reviews returned to authors

- **9/1/26:** Revised drafts submitted for second review
- **11/1/26:** 2nd round reviews returned to authors
- **12/1/26:** Final and complete articles submitted
- **6/1/27:** Special issue published

Submission Process

Please follow *Transactions* preparation guidelines and, by March 1, 2026, submit your full article to the guest editors (tcportewig@arizona.edu, rrodrigo@arizona.edu). If you would like to discuss an idea or topic for submission, do not hesitate to email the guest editors in advance of the March 1, 2026 due date. Once you submit a full article, it will be peer reviewed. Based on the peer reviews, the guest editors will select articles for the special issue.

Human Subjects

If you plan to present the results of a study involving human research subjects or will use examples from corporate or government communications, please obtain all approvals and permissions for publishing your results from your institution, company, and/or agency before you submit your manuscript for review.

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