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Newsletter

IEEE Professional Communication Society

Call for Papers

The third-quarter 1984 issues of the *Transactions on Education* and the *Transactions on Professional Communication* will have a jointly prepared set of papers on **education for communication.** Contributions may be sent to either editor and must be received by October 31, 1983.

The general theme is how students are taught to communicate. Topics of interest are successful curricula; teaching in English, communication, and engineering departments; and industry's view of graduates' communication abilities. A detailed call for papers will appear in the June *Transactions.*

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Whenever you can shorten a sentence, do. And one always can. The best sentence? The shortest.

—Gustave Flaubert

Inside

The Degeneration of Technical Writing

Excerpted from the ABCA Bulletin, *September 1982. Because this article is provocative and, likely, controversial, it is a good subject for commentary in the next* Newsletter; *write to the editor by June 1.*

An increasing shift in emphasis in many technical writing classes from the teaching of technical writing to that of business writing is impairing the academic integrity of both technical and business communication. In some cases colleges offer courses with such non-threatening titles as Professional Writing and Career Writing to fulfill technical writing requirements. Predictably, the vagueness of the course title reflects an adulterated and unfocused course that is neither technical writing nor business writing.

Faced with fewer English majors and decreasing enrollments in literature courses, English professors have presented themselves as the most obvious ones to run technical writing programs. With the philosophy that technical writing is merely advanced freshman composition, English chairmen with degrees in Victorian poetry or American literature proceed to assign Shakespeare and Milton scholars to teach descriptions of mechanisms, formats for feasibility studies, and strategies for responding to RFPs.

Writing about technical subjects requires much more than basic writing skills. Depending on the situation, someone involved in technical or business writing might need to know engineering terminology, computer functions, laboratory apparatus, or advertising strategies. The contention that English teachers are communication specialists because they studied fiction and poetry reflects a naive understanding of communication in a technological society. Of the approximately 30,000 new book titles that come into print each year, only about ten percent are fiction.

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From the editor . . .

What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.

—Shakespeare

Because of the kind of cooperation that surfaced for this issue of the *Newsletter,* I'm beginning to think that *Newsletter* editing could become fun. There are seven by-lined items in this issue that we (the editors) didn't have to create or reprint. They were a great help and, I imagine, are more interesting to you than a full issue of our unilateral selections.

Surely there must be many other thoughts out there worth sharing with the 2400 PCS members. For example, did you ever use any of the communication hot lines? Try calling these numbers with your language-use puzzlers:

- (301) 689-4327, *Grammarphone* at Frostburg State College
- (309) 438-2345, *Grammar Hotline* at Illinois State University
- (501) 569-3162, *Writer's Hotline* at the University of Arkansas

And if you know of other such professional communication links, please send the information to me. Maybe the *Newsletter* can become a directory/resource.

There's a very helpful article on newsletter development by Janet Potvin in the December *Transactions.* Dr. Potvin gives an inventory of potential newsletter contents:

Abstracts
Advertisements
Annotations
Announcements
Awards
Bibliographies
Book reviews
Calendars
Calls for . . .
Cartoons
Classifieds
Deadlines
Departments
Editor's column
Feature articles
Forecasts
Grant information
How-to-do-it articles
Interviews
Job listings
Legislative reports
Letters to the editor
Messages
Opinions
Order forms
News
Photographs
Puzzles
Queries
Questionnaires
Quotes
Readers' forum
Regular columns
Reports
Requests
Standards
Statistics
Subscription forms
Surveys
Tutorials

Some of these items we already have, but to realize our *Newsletter* potential, PCS needs specialty contributors and regular columnists to provide a steady flow of current and interesting information.

If only one percent of you contributed a short feature once a year, we'd probably be overwhelmed with content. Harder, perhaps, is finding the 0.1 or 0.2 percent who will regularly (that's only quarterly) provide a specific category of news or information so that the *Newsletter* can develop a recognizable and dependable character. And graphics should be an integral part of that character.

In the previous *Newsletter* I made a similar appeal and said "write to us if you have such a talent." Perhaps "talent" implied impressive credentials or experience; anyway, no one applied. A simpler definition is "general intelligence" or "ability." Surely there's no dearth of *that* in PCS?

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IEEE Professional Communication Society

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Leon Pickus, **Treasurer**
Dan Plung, **Secretary**

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Rudy Joenk, **Editor**
Jeff Brand, **Associate Editor, Layout**

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Besides reporters and columnists, we urgently need an associate editor (or two) for both the *Newsletter* and the *Transactions*. Jeff Brand is going to Fujisawa, Japan next month for a two-year assignment as editor of IBM's product publications. That's quite a challege because the writers there know English only as a second language. Jeff has contributed significantly to the development of the *Transactions* since we signed him on early in 1981, and he will be sorely missed.

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Membership Development— How We Stack Up

Year-end statistics for 1982 showed that the IEEE Professional Communication Society was twenty-sixth in size of the thirty-one IEEE societies. This statistic is something we must concentrate on improving because our organization provides a service that should be of value to all IEEE members. We are not a special interest group whose discipline is practiced by only a few specialists. Obviously we have not gotten our message across: that our charter is to improve the effectiveness of communication of the working engineer rather than of the professional communicator. We are a professional communication society rather than a professional communicator's society.

Growth

The 2396 IEEE members and 26 affiliates with which we closed 1982 represented 5.9 percent growth—fourth greatest of the IEEE societies. Our growth rate has consistently been near the top since rejuvenation of our organization about seven years ago. If we continue at this pace we will soon overtake a number of our sister organizations.

Member Grade Profile

Data supplied by the IEEE Membership Development Committee show that although we do not compare well with the other societies in percentage of Fellows, we do have a higher-than-average percentage of Senior Members. Our share of Associate Members is also somewhat high—probably due to those who consider themselves to be primarily writers and editors rather than engineers. Associates may be interested to know, however, that admission or transfer to IEEE membership recognizes

> Contributions equivalent to those of (a) to (d) above in areas such as technical editing, patent prosecution, or patent law, provided these contributions serve to advance progress substantially in IEEE designated fields

to fulfill membership requirements, where items (a) to (d) refer to the more conventional forms of engineering activities.

Geographic Profile

The PCS geographic profile is especially interesting. Although most of our activities are centered in the northeast, Boston-to-Washington area, we have many members in other parts of the United States, especially California and the southeast. (Our upcoming conference has been scheduled for Atlanta, Georgia to recognize the interest in that part of the country.) More interesting, though, is the fact that a full third of our membership is outside the United States. In fact, one of our few chapters is based in London, England. Of the 110 new members in the last quarter of 1982, thirteen were from Canada, ten from Europe, five from Asia, four from Australia/New Zealand, and two from Africa.

Membership Feedback Requested

The PCS Administrative Committee is concerned with how best to serve our large number of foreign members, especially those who do not consider English to be their primary language. We have sought, and continue to seek, feedback from these members, as well as from others who would like us to expand activities in any specialized area. Member response is the only means we have for judging how well our programs fulfill our members' needs.

—Richard Robinson
Membership Chairman

□

> Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.
>
> —Francis Bacon

Attention, Students!

There's been a lot of talk in newspapers and magazines lately about our being in the midst of the second industrial revolution. We've seen an explosion in new technology in the past few years. Just look around at the video games and disposable digital watches if you need proof. What all this means is that the world is a very different place from what it was just a few years ago.

The jobs we have in this new world have also changed drastically. Programmers didn't exist a few decades ago. Electrical engineers now consider transistors to be antiques and vacuum tubes to be from some ancient civilization. More important, technical writers no longer have to behave like engineers who are chronic underachievers. Technical writing is a career that has come into respectability at last.

There was a time when most technical writers began doing one of two things: writing or engineering. Either through need or desire, many engineers began to document the work of other engineers. Some of them discovered that they had a talent for translating technical information and presenting it in a clear and concise manner to people both in and out of their profession. They became technical writers.

In much the same way, many former teachers and English majors began to focus their writing skills on more technical areas. Members of this group recognized the impact of the technological boom and decided to take advantage of it; they also became technical writers. In many circumstances it is easier for people who can write to develop their technical background than it is for an engineer to learn to write. People recognize that developing new technology and docu-

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Della A. Whittaker

Della Whittaker, one of the most gifted and active members of the IEEE Professional Communication Society, died January 12, 1983 at her home in Adelphi, Maryland. She was a victim of cancer, with which she had suffered with inspiring courage for more than two years.

Born in Philadelphia, Della grew up in Washington, DC and earned three degrees from the University of Maryland. Her doctorate, in English teaching, was awarded in 1972.

During her years as a graduate student, and variously until her last illness, she taught technical writing at Maryland, at Prince George's Community College, and at her place of employment. She was a technical editor for ten years, first at the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and later in the Harry Diamond Laboratories of the U.S. Army.

Della's personal interests were many—home making, needlework, and gardening; Toastmasters International and the Unitarian Church; and volunteer counseling for the American Cancer Society. She worked skillfully and enthusiastically, met challenges with courage and honesty, and solved problems creatively.

In her profession, Della was nationally admired for her accomplishments and dependability. For many years she was also active in the Society for Technical Communication, contributing to journals, moderating discussions, and managing conferences. She established and conducted scholarship programs for both STC and PCS and was a highly respected member of governing and advisory groups in both societies. She helped administer PCS's home-study course *Technically-Write!* and was a member of the National Council of Teachers of English. Her many book reviews in the journals of all three professional organizations were models of informative discussion and judicial opinion.

Della is survived by her husband Denis, two sons, and a granddaughter. With them, technical communicators deeply regret the loss of this gallant, talented, homemaker, humanist, and humanitarian.

—Emily Schlesinger

□

Financing PCS Operations

Major sources of income for PCS are (1) membership fees, (2) PCS conferences and *Technically-Write!* workshops, and (3) the *Transactions.*

Most of you probably think—if you thought about it at all—that most of the money for running PCS comes from membership dues. Well, it doesn't; nearly twice as much revenue is realized through the sale of our *Transactions.* Of course, there's a large expense associated with producing the *Transactions* but, after all, it is our principal product.

The *Transactions* is the primary link between professional communicators and the engineering community. It also links communicators within PCS to those in industry, government, and academia. If we're going to continue to sell this product, we've got to keep it saleable. That means original papers on topics of interest to our readers.

Our conferences are becoming viable income producers—both through increased attendance and by the sale of the *Conference Record.* Our 1983 conference will tap another source of revenue: exhibits. As each conference proves to be bigger and better than its predecessor, this activity shows promise of becoming a major source of income. Expenses associated with conferences include rental of meeting rooms, production and distribution of the *Conference Record,* honoraria for speakers, and luncheons and coffee breaks. Quality speakers on interesting topics presented at a well-run meeting are the requisites for success.

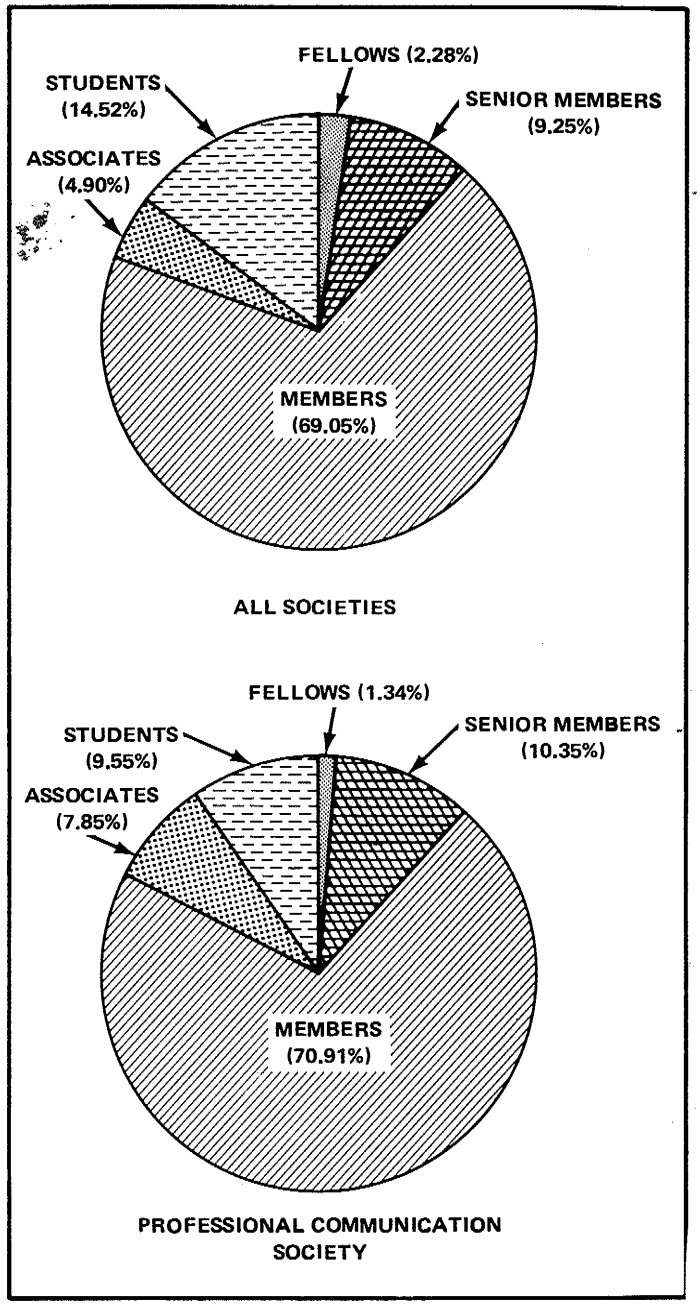
The catalyst for financial success is membership participation—by contributions to both the *Transactions* and our conferences. Increased participation will provide the fiscal strength to sustain our professional stature.

—Leon Pickus
Treasurer

□

Consult the dictionery to avoid mispelings.

Who We Are



□

Do not say all that you know, but always know what you say.

—Claudius

The New Underprivileged Minority

Excerpted from the Christian Challenge, *February 1983. This is the farthest-out—and funniest—projection I have read about a desexed English language.*—Ed.

I can see it coming: The dictionary will be thoroughly rewritten. Except in unavoidable reference to specific individuals, we can say goodbye to such prefixes and suffixes as *boy, chief, lad, male, man, master,* and *men,* and even such words as *he, him,* and *his.* Even the currently popular use of *chairperson* will soon be condemned because it contains that offensive noun *son.* Rather than *person,* it should logically become *perthing.*

Skipping through the new dictionary, we will thus find changes such as these:

abdomen: *abdoperthing*; pl., *abdoperthingses.*
boycott: *perthingcott.*
female: *feperthing.*
heterosexual: This word will be stricken from the language, and all books containing it will be burned.
history: *perthingtory.*
humanity: *huperthingity.*
hymn: It is difficult to predict a change of this one because it is the sound of the word that is objectionable. Possibly it could become *shymn.*
jack: A man's name; change to *Matilda.*
kerchief: *kerchieftainess.*
kingfisher: *queenfisher.*
lady: *perthingy* (if there are any remaining)
mail: Discard. The sound is objectionable. Use *post* instead.
mankind: *perthingkind.*
pawpaw: *mawmaw.*
quartermaster: *quarterperthing.*
sheikh: In a burst of magnanimity, this could be made *heikh.*
sheriff: Used only for feperthing holders of that office; the masculine form could be *he-riff.*
thimble: *tperthingble* (watch your saliva).
van: Again, a man's name; change the name of this vehicle to *Lois.*
woman: *woperthing.*
yellowjacket: Includes a man's name; change to *yellow-matildaet.*
zero: preferred synonym for *man.*

Though railing at the seemingly inevitable, we shall gladly leave, uncontested, the following: *she*ars, *she*ets, *she*bang, *She*bah—and, oh yes—*her*maphrodite.

—*Will Denson*
San Mateo, CA

□

An Electronic Novel

The nation's first electronic novel has been written in two and one-half days, published in three hours, and copies are being distributed within 16 minutes each to a nationwide network of personal computer users. The novel is shorter (20,000 words) than most, but suggests the new technology available as publishing options.

The novel, *Blind Pharaoh,* was created by writer Burke Campbell at the ArtCulture Resource Centre in Toronto, Canada. Campbell began writing on an Apple III personal computer, equipped with Apple Writer word processing software, at 9:37 p.m. on November 14, 1982.

As Campbell wrote, each chapter was proofread on a second Apple III equipped with a printer and reformatted for electronic transmission. Corrections to the manuscript were made the afternoon of Nov. 17, and at 5:30 p.m. that day the novel was transmitted from Toronto to Source Telecomputing Corp. (STC) in McLean, VA.

In McLean, the novel was received chapter-by-chapter by members of the STC editorial department. Each chapter was proofread a second time, separated into page lengths, and assigned the appropriate chapter heading to enable subscribers to STC's service, "The Source," to read the novel with ease. The entire 19 chapters of *Blind Pharaoh* were successfully transmitted, formatted, and filed on "The Source" by 8:30 p.m. on Nov. 17, at which point the novel could be received by any subscriber who typed the command NOVEL on the system.

—Authorship *(National Writers Club), January-February 1983*

□

Perception Problems of an Author in Reading His Own Manuals

Lately my company has purchased a micro computer. We have accumulated several pieces of hardware and software that are not immediately compatible, and therefore we are experiencing a period of "implementation." For me this meant dealing with many manuals that I really *must* read to get any information about the system. I have little source code, and no programmer to put the various components into meaningful juxtaposition.

What I immediately see, as I always do, is that these manuals are rather badly written, whereas if *I* had written the manuals they would have been much better, and I would have found the information already. As it is, with no index, no ordered table of instructions and switches, I must read these boring books from start to finish. Then I must reread and reread until the obscurity takes root, finally flowing into understanding. Unfortunately, I cannot have a long growing season. So why didn't they write the manuals as well as I would have written them?

Either the authors of these manuals knew too much or not enough. They did not have my experience and cannot understand what I would like to know about the system. If the authors understand their audience, then I must not be the right person to be reading this manual. But, unfortunately, I *must!*

Although I believe in my heart of hearts that these are really poorly written manuals—boring and disorganized, I cannot help but wonder whether if I had written the manuals, I would see all of my mistakes. I am trying to perfect one now which requires a lot of philosophy on information and hierarchies. It is a difficult subject, and as I learn more about it I know that I am no longer the proper reflection of the naive user who will probably read it.

Generally, the problem is that the writer cannot ever consistently perceive his own writing. When he is learning a system for the first time, he can write for a naive user if he does not wait too long before getting something on paper (or other medium). If he is writing for a sophisticated audience he can, perhaps, become sophisticated himself, thus communicating adequately with a person of equal level. Manuals are, however, always written for someone who does not know the material; if the reader knew the material he would not be *using* the manual, he would be *proofreading* it. The reader may be sophisticated in that he understands similar tools or other aspects of this system, but he is never master of the part he is reading—that is why he is reading it.

Why is this simple, obvious stuff so hard to say? Perhaps for the same reason that a writer cannot see how well he is doing in the eyes of his reader: The writer is always one step ahead of the reader and therefore cannot truly express the simple connection made in the act of discovery.

The longer a writer waits from the time he begins learning a system until the time he begins writing, the more likely he is to misjudge the learning experience that his readers require to jump into his level of understanding. This means that very complicated new ideas embedded in systems may take so long for the writer to understand fully that he may lose any hope of simplifying the process of conveying the message.

Perhaps I can never reread a manual of my own without bringing to it all of the information that I never put down on the paper. Perhaps I can never see how someone else would have a hard time getting the point. How utterly depressing this is!

The image I have created in my mind for this difficulty is that of the filmmaker. A picture is taken, but in our case not one that can be fully directed because it is taken of a real event—it is naturally a "document-ary." Once the passing events are filmed on the writer's understanding, it may take some time before sufficient film is shot that is worth developing into a document.

Then editing is required. In the editing there is a chance to reapply some of the naivete of the original viewer, tempered by the sophisticated understanding of the director. If the experience takes over from the naivete, there will be insufficient lead-in material, and the film becomes a jumble of quick scenes that must be viewed again and again, once the ending is known, to be appreciated. This is oversophistication. It may make great works of art, but it makes terrible manuals.

The jumble of information with few interconnections may also occur from the undersophisticated filmmaker, who does not understand that an image cannot be glimpsed for only a second in order to make an impact. But even the smallest level of experience usually gets the new filmmaker over this fault. This is like the manual written by a "technical writer" who writes only what he is told and does not attempt to understand the subject himself. He is writing only

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New PC-ers November 1982–February 1983

AFRICA

Egypt
Abdilazyz, T. M.
Awad, S.A.R.
Hamoy, A.M.N.

Libya
Bucidra F. A.
Singh, M. P.

Nigeria
Fapojuwo, A. O.
Sashi, B. A.

ASIA

China, Republic of
Chen, Y.-K.
Lin, M.-K.

Hong Kong
Chan, K.E.
Lin-Shing, L.
Wah-Sze, G.L.
Yuen, H.

India
Ramachandran, V.
Subbarao, E. C.

Japan
Cohen, C. L.

Philippines
Mackertich, P. J.

Singapore
Heng, G. S.
Ng, H. L.

AUSTRALIA
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De Silva, A. J.
Fidler, G.
Gierczycki, L. M.
Lau, S. K.
MacGregor, N. J.

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil
De Campos Salles, J.
Schmulcher, L. M.

Ecuador
Bayas, M. J.

Jamaica
Cox, V. H.

Peru
Chamochumbi, J. V.
Herrera, M. A.
Sanchez, N.

Puerto Rico
Cherson, J.

Venezuela
Medina, A. V.
Villarte, F.J.T.

EUROPE

Austria
Monko, A. D., Jr.

Denmark
Elbaek, J. F.
Kjaer, V.
Staunstrup, J.

England
Dyke, J. G.
Lee, C. K.
Moore, P. J.
Nevadovic, V. V.
Tie, G. K.
Wamdeo, C. L.

Finland
Helminen, T. P
Rastas, T. J.
Rinne, I. S.

Germany (Fed. Rep.)
Meissner, J. H.
Nelson, D. A.

Ireland
Butler, P. J.
Campbell, J. G.
O'Donoghue, P.

Spain
Del Rio Furio, M.
Galvez, J. F.
Hernandez, C.

Switzerland
Rueppel, R. A.
Schlatter, M.

MIDDLE EAST

United Arab Emirates
Ray, A.

NEW ZEALAND
Emanuel, J. C.
Greenbank, I. J.
Miller, B. D.

NORTH AMERICA

Canada

Alberta
De Oliveira, R. P.

British Columbia
Veidt, B.

Manitoba
Kosc, J. D.
Tataryn, L. A.

New Brunswick
Johnston, J. S.
Leger, B.L.J.

Ontario
Arslander, O.
Beckley, D. K.
Hunt, P. J.
Kirk, T. W.
Klett, R. D.
Lundy, J. P.
Malm, H. L.
Moore, P. D.
Paczuski, S. B.
Somppi, D. E.
Szpak, R. W.
Thomas, B. R.
Turcham, M. P.
Venis, M. A.
Zaydik, F.

Quebec
Casorio, S. A.
Drouin, J. N.
Onsy, S. J.
Pandana, R. A.
Rowley, D. A.
Simopoulos, B.

United States

Alabama
Marshall, M., Jr.
Ruland, W. H., III

Arizona
Allen, E. V.
Dixon, S.
McDonnell, R. P.
Munson, G. M.

Arkansas
Alotaibi, S. A.
Engelken, R. D.

California
Anderson, K. W.
Bathiany, R. H.
Buis, H. F.
Clifford, S. G.
Cranston, E. M.
Houze, W. C.
Hu, S. D.
Hundt, K. L.
Jessen, E.
Jones, N. L.
Kermaani, K. M.
Meier, G. D.
Murray, J. L.
Pierson, R.
Pizzica, S. V.
Roske, G. M.
Ryals, P. D.
Scheinert, P. M.
Schreiber, O. W.
Suchecki, M. T.
Tenney, G. S.
Thai, L. H.
Tran, T.
Wichern, P. S.
Wilkey, J. B.
Wilson, L. E.
Woods, J. D.
Yang, S.
Yapkowitz, K.
Yuam, D. S.

Colorado
Brown, W. C.
Davies, D. G.
Hackos, J. T.
Hunt, D. H.
Sellers, G. A., III

Connecticut
Biarstow, J. N.
Reid, J. M.

Florida
Coniglio, C. F.
Meadows, G. W., Jr.
Morefield, B. H.
Skrzypkowiak, S. S.

Idaho
Garner, R. L.

Illinois
Burlingame, C. M.
Ebstein, B.
Eng, P. K.
Fiske, M. J.
Greene, J. J.
Kathan, A. E.
Reutell, R. W.
White, C. B.

Indiana
Little, L. H.

Iowa
Ferris, J. D.

Kansas
Wilson, P. D.

Kentucky
Stacy, W. N.

Louisiana
Stewart, S. L.

Maine
Gould, B. L.

Maryland
Corbeau, A. B.
Hersey, J. P.
Kehoe, W. P.
Klug, R. E.
Novak, L. V.
Parkinson, C. L.
Sanders, P. L.

Massachusetts
Bond, J. S.
Bredin, C. W.
Brother, M. D.
Evans, S. S.
Jack J.
Kinsella, E. J.
Kotikian, G.
Kresse, J. M.
Liu, T. T.
Magers, C. S.
Miner, M. C.
Paradis, J. G.
Reynolds, R. A.

Michigan
Darnell, D. L. III
Kidd, W. R.
Pawlukiewicz, M. J.
Schrotzberger, R. J.

Minnesota
Determan, M. C.
Mansfield, G. R.

Minnesota
Bach, D.
Eyerly, J. K.
Isaacson, P. O.
Mikelsons, R. H.

Mississippi
Hays, W. D.

Missouri
Ross, C. D.
Schmedake, R. A.
Shelley, W. B.
Tunink, J. A.

New Hampshire
Hirni, J. T.
Zysk, T. J.

New Jersey
Griffin, W.
Meyer, B. P.
Meyer, S. P.
Natkin, H. B.
Nishino, T.
Peterson, J. N.
Spindler, L. C.
Verma, R. C.
Vuong, L.

New Mexico
Burt, D. H.
Fuller, K. R.
Merry, P.R.

New York
Baroody, A. J.
Casowitz, P.
Crandon, L. H.
Doren, G. K.
Goldstein, J. M.
Hanson, M. D.
Jerril, R. J.
Karner, N. L.
Knirsch, M.
McCracken, D. R.
Mercer, R. T.
Noberini, R. P.
Nordenholt, D.
Powers, M. N.
Sawin, D. C.
Seymour, P.
Szymanski, K.
Zauzmer, A. J.

North Carolina
Cranfill, S. R.
Stoker, R. B.
Vogt, H. E.
White, J. M.

Ohio
Fenster, N. S.
Grimm, J. M.
Reiner, R. L.

Oregon
Jacob, R. L.
Yunker, F. C.

Pennsylvania
Bereiter, S. R.
Bosch, K. P.
Chidekel, C.
Dombrowski, M. A.
Heverly, G. A.
Sankar, C. S.

South Carolina
Campbell, C. S.
Katter, O. E., Jr.

Tennessee
Palmer, D. P.

Texas
Backus, L. G.
Bahl, R. J.
Cast, L. J.
Gober, M. D.
Hoffman, A. A.
McCoy, J. F.
O'Bryant, R.
Raffoul, G.
Schoenberg, T. P.
Wehlander, E. O.

Utah
Blackburn, C. W.

Vermont
Williams, R. Q.

Virginia
Barnes, J. M.
Bittle, W. R.
Coleman, J. O.
Keene, G. A.
McCarter, P. M.

Washington
Corley, V. M.
Flanagan, M. C.
Maurer, J. M.
Mraz, M. A.
Oberg, D. L.
Thomas, J. E.

Wisconsin
Connerton, B. J.
Gwen, P. L.
Kline, R. R.
Miller, G. A.
Warning, J. P.

—Emily Schlesinger

□

C A L E N D A R

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	The Southeastern Conference on English in the Two-Year College (SCETC), an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English, is holding its third annual conference June 27 – July 1 at the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Park campus. Tuition is $300. For registration information contact **Dr. Nell Ann Pickett** **SCETC Institute in Technical Communication** **Hinds Junior College** **Raymond, MS 39154**			Massachusetts Institute of Technology will holds its 27th annual "Communicating Technical Information" program from June 13 – 17. Tuition is $800. To apply for admission contact **Director of the Summer Session** **MIT** **Cambridge, MA 02139**	EASTERN ORTHODOX GREAT FRIDAY	
8 MOTHER'S DAY EASTERN ORTHODOX EASTER	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute will hold its 31st Technical Writers' Institute from June 13 – 17. Tuition for the five-day program is $675. The Technical Writing Institute for Teachers will be held during the same week. For additional information write or call **Office of Continuing Studies** **RPI** **Troy, NY 12181** **(518) 270-6442**			The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC), sister society of the STC in the United Kingdom, will host a three-day conference in Bristol, England, on September 7 – 9. This year's theme is "Technical Communication and Developing Communities." Descriptive brochures are available from **Mary M. Schaefer** **1951 Seminary Road** **Silver Spring, MD 20910**		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Drexel University–Continuing Education will offer a three-day course, "Technical Writing," that starts on June 15. Cost is $475. For registration information write or call **Robert Ross** **Drexel University** **32nd and Chestnut Street** **Philadelphia, PA 19104** **(215) 895-2154**			Worcester Polytechnic Institute will be conducting three classes in June – "Persuasive Presentation Skills for Engineers and Technical Executives" from June 15 – 17 (cost $695); "Improving Your Negotiating Skills"; and "Written Communications." The latter two classes are scheduled for June 13 and 14; each costs $495. For more information call or write **Ginny Bazarian** **Worcester Polytechnic Institute** **Continuing Education** **Worcester, MA 01609** **(617) 793-5517**		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 MEMORIAL DAY	31	Notes:			

In letters essays and reports use commas to separate items in series.

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Manuals . . .

(continued from page 7)

because the author cannot hold a pencil, or spell.

When I am faced with these jumbly manuals, I often wonder if they were written by the oversophisticated programmer who thinks the connections are obvious, or the undersophisticated writer who assumes that I see the point—although he doesn't. What worries me is that because of the perception problems of all writers, maybe I am creating jumbly manuals for somebody else? Surely not! Certainly not like these before me—I swear it!

Having raised this problem, can I conjure a solution? I think so. Perfection is not possible, but improvement is. Jumbly manuals, whether the result of over- or undersophistication can be improved by cold, clear logic in a table of contents. Tables of interconnections can help also. And most important is a good editor who is *not* the writer.

Too many of the manuals for microcomputers must be written in isolation without good editors who can bring a more balanced view to the material. Those without editors might try putting the manual under the nose of some intelligent outsider to the project. The perception problem is the result of solipsism and will disappear with intelligent feedback.

So phone your colleagues and get some feedback before you produce a manual like the ones I have here before me. Please! Manuals like these ruin the reputation of us all.

—*Diana Patterson*
Reprinted from ACM SIGDOC
Asterisk, *July 1982*

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Students . . .

(continued from page 4)

menting it are two different skills, and one doesn't have to possess both.

Today there is new interest in training potential technical writers. Many colleges offer either individual courses or degree programs in technical writing. These courses allow students to develop both engineering and literary skills simultaneously, to the betterment of our profession. We hope they, too, will become technical writers.

One way to take advantage of the new trends in the field of technical writing is to become a student member of the IEEE Professional Communication Society. The IEEE is the largest professional engineering organization in the world, and as a member of the PCS, you'll rub elbows with some of the leading technical writers today.

So, if you're an English major who wants to take advantage of the technology boom, join us. If you're an engineer who's grown tired of the drawing board and wants to start communicating, join us. If you know that you'd like to become a technical writer, join us. Most of all, if you would like to be in the thick of things in the new industrial revolution, join us!

—*James Gleason*
Student Chairman

□

Goal for Excellence in EE Education

Extracted from guidelines in the IEEE Education Society Newsletter, *February 1983.*

One outstanding characteristic which serves to separate the excellent from the ordinary programs in electrical engineering is the provision that students develop abilities to communicate well in writing and speaking. Every student must be given opportunities to improve his or her communication skills.

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The Sincere Phonibird

Behavior Pattern:

The Sincere Phonibird lives by the *Boren Dictum: If you're going to be a phoney, be sincere about it.* The members of the species walk with an authoritative air and always wear a serious expression characterized by furrowed brow. When communicating, they tend to point and interdigitate. They have mastered the technique of maximizing the pupilary contact and can gaze intently into other creatures' eyes without blinking.

Habitat:

Found in all bureaucracies. Often sighted outside conference rooms checking crib notes in order to be fully knowledgeable of some matter to be discussed. Academic and corporate nests attract long-term residents, but the species tends to thrash around governmental bureaucracies with more tenacity.

Plummage:

Dignified. Conservatively plumed for success.

Song:

Hhrrrrrramphhhh. Of course . . . .

—*Jim Boren*
Mumblepeg, *April 1983*

□

Writer's Block

A computer game . . .

Battalions of mixed metaphors swarm down and try to land in your text, dragging dangling participles and split infinitives in their wake. If you manage to defend your copy against these conventional weapons, legions of malapropisms and misplaced modifiers arise in a second wave assault.

—*Judith Hooper*
Omni, *February 1983*

□

Degeneration . . .

(continued from page 1)

What we too often find are members of the technical writing faculty learning their subject the same way they teach it to their students—from a textbook, and often the same textbook they assign their students. The implications of this are disturbing. First, these teachers bring no new content into the classroom to justify their presence; the students can read the textbooks on their own. Second, if there are any errors or omissions or misplaced emphasis in the textbook, the untrained professor is less likely to recognize them and to alert the students to other points of view.

This second concern is a very real one. Compounding the present problem (and adding to the irony) are the many technical writing textbooks that have been authored by English teachers who themselves are lacking in qualifications. These authors used other books as their source, perhaps textbooks written by equally inexperienced people, creating a cycle that threatens to go on and on unless someone speaks up about it.

An examination of technical writing syllabi at several schools reveals broad variances in the topics being taught. There is no consensus or even close agreement about what constitutes a technical writing course. My study is a very limited one, but it does underscore the need for a more comprehensive nationwide survey of what is being taught in the technical writing classroom.

(continued on next page)

A typical teacher in the study spends one class period talking about the library, then cancels the next for a library tour. At least three meetings are spent on job application letters and resumes; six meetings are set aside for student oral presentations; up to three classes are canceled for office conferences. In most cases, teachers spend more time on the application letter than on the preparation of technical manuals or the organization of sales proposals.

Another misuse of time is that spent on oral communication. Many technical writing teachers set aside two weeks (13 percent of the lecture time) for student orals. Most technical writing textbooks encourage that policy by providing a separate chapter on speech communication—one notable exception being Andrews' and Blickle's *Technical Writing: Principles and Forms.*

No one denies the importance of oral communication in industry. Students certainly do need to practice oral presentations. But most colleges have separate courses and even separate departments in speech, and speech instructors are better prepared than writing teachers to help the students achieve oral competency.

We need to reconsider what it is that constitutes a technical writing course, and how it differs from a business writing course. We need to redefine what we are supposed to be teaching in the technical writing classroom.

Is there enough content to justify something called technical writing? The answer is yes. There is no need to cancel classes or to turn a writing course into a speech course. There is no need to tell college students how to fold a letter and put it into an envelope, or to lecture about the three variations of a typist's initials. Rather, our technical writing teachers could discuss the preparation of industrial standards, or examine the many government specifications and standards that deal with technical writing. Students could be informed about the Naval Publications and Forms Center in Philadelphia where they can get free government specifications pertaining to technical publications in their field. More textbooks could have chapters on technical manuals: installation, operations, and maintenance manuals. Most products, from tanks to toys, require manuals, and the business and technical people are responsible for writing them. The placement office can teach students to write resumes; we can teach them to organize and write technical manuals.

And we might also teach them about patent writing, technical sections of sales proposals, proposals for grants, suggestion reports, inventory control reports, and laboratory reports, to name but a few forms of technical writing overlooked by many teachers. We can spend more time on the integration of graphics and text. We can examine the styles and formats of technical articles. There are also studies in scientific terminology, techniques of technical abridgment and abstracting, revisions of computer manuals, and even technical translations. No one who truly knows technical writing could think of canceling a single class or using class time to visit the library.

If our colleges cannot find enough qualified teachers in the business community to teach courses in technical and business writing, then we must give more thought to the training of the teachers already employed. Extra training is critically needed to regain the academic integrity of these courses. To this end, business and engineering departments must spend more time counseling English departments about their special communication needs. Interdepartmental seminars could broaden and deepen the English teacher's knowledge of the scientific and business communities. A shared approach would resolve many of our present inadequacies.

—*R. S. Kellner*
Texas A&M University

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Check to see if you any words out.

Borenword

mushware—n. A category of computer software that is more mushy than soft. *Mushware* is based on meandering, mushy, and difficult-to-put-your-finger-on logic. About the time the programmer thinks he or she understands the logic of the program, it mushifies into a psychological loop and fritterates into a marginal concept.

—*Jim Boren*
Mumblepeg, *January 1983*

□

Taking Part in "Papers Night"

At this time of year PCS members are invited to spend an evening with IEEE student members across the country. The reason: to watch the students take part in the local IEEE "Papers Night," and at the same time to encourage them in their studies. It can be a thoroughly worthwhile experience, both for them and for you.

Every year between March and May, undergraduate students enrolled in electrical, electronic, and computer engineering courses across the U.S. and Canada have the opportunity to compete for IEEE awards. Each participant (or team of participants) has worked for several months on an engineering project and now will present the results to a team of evaluators.

The students are judged partly on the ingenuity and originality of the projects they have undertaken but primarily on the quality of their written reports and oral presentations. As PCS members we are ideally suited to fill roles as members of the audience or, better still, as judges.

Topics can range from design, development, and installation of an electronic scoreboard for a hockey arena to installation and testing the accuracy of RS-232 standard parallel-wire and fibre-optic links between computer terminals. The students are often coached by their professors of technical writing, who have already held preliminary contests to choose the four or five individuals or teams to take part in the local IEEE Papers Night.

Normally there are three judges, who read and assess the written reports before they attend the oral presentations. To ensure consistency of assessment, they evaluate the reports using a three-page form developed at IEEE headquarters and assess the oral presentations using a form developed locally.

The quality of presentation, both of the written and oral reports, is surprisingly high. Many undergraduates present their findings with extraordinary confidence and panache, setting an example that many graduate engineers would do well to follow.

There are modest cash prizes for the winning reports, which are donated by the local IEEE section. But of even more value to the undergraduates are the experience they gain and, for the winners, the knowledge that they can include their participation in their resumes.

The best papers are forwarded to IEEE headquarters, where they are entered in the national student papers contest. The winners are invited to present their papers personally at a national conference, usually the following fall.

The success of an IEEE Papers Night depends not only on the undergraduates who work on the projects and make the oral presentations, but also on the presence of an interested audience to speak to. They need our participation—just once a year—to encourage them in their endeavors. Heed the call in your area.

—*Ron Blicq*
Education Chairman

□

The greatest possible merit of style is, of course, to make the words absolutely disappear into the thought.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne

Atlanta to Host PCS's Annual Conference

The Georgia Tourist Bureau says that "Atlanta Has It All"—skyscrapers, futuristic hotels, luxury shops, family eateries to elegant restaurants, restored plantations, and even romantic riverboat rides. Well, the conference committee wholeheartedly agrees. That's why we're heading south for our annual conference that will be held October 19-21 at the Sheraton Atlanta.

Join us there as we examine the **Many Facets of Computer Communications.** The formal program will address these topics:

Technology in Written Communication includes

writing and editing, terminals, word processors, automated offices, and personal computers compared with main utility computers.

Technology in Conferences and Meetings focuses on large-scale TV, satellite links, video tapes, and computer-generated graphics.

Technology in Program Documentation features proposals, manuals, reports, data management, electronic support technology, communication networking, and staffing engineering communication projects.

Workshops, tutorials, poster sessions, and vendor exhibits will emphasize the impact of computers on the documentation process. These sessions will enable both the presenters and the audience to exchange information on applications of currently available, new, and developing technologies.

The Sheraton Atlanta is located in mid-town Atlanta, right on Peachtree Street, and is only 14 miles from the new Hartsfield International Airport, which is one of the largest, most architecturally sophisticated airports in the world. To make traveling easier, there's the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), which you can ride across the city in white coaches for 60 cents, including transfers.

The Sheraton, one of Atlanta's largest and finest meeting and convention centers, has spacious guest rooms, the Okeefenokee and Cypress Bay Restaurant (skytop), Terrace Cafe (open area, atrium-type) and Ashley's Lounge (featuring nightly entertainment).

There are plenty of other things to do and enjoy while in Atlanta. There's Nikolais' Roof, a Czarist-Russian dining room, where Russian-uniformed waiters take your orders for such specialties as piroshkis, borscht, and squab Diane. There's the delightful Mary Macs, specializing in southern vegetables, and the Anaikali, featuring Indian cuisine.

Atlanta has many tree-shaded parks, a magnificent toy museum, some gorgeous Greek Revival homes, art centers, opera, and symphonies. Shopping is great. There's Tiffany's, Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman-Marcus, and two of Atlanta's leading stores, Rich's and Davison's.

Other places of interest are Grant Park, home of the Atlanta Zoo; the Governor's Mansion (free admission); the 3200-acre Stone Mountain State Park (16 miles east of Atlanta); and Wren's Nest (home of the late Joel Chandler Harris who wrote the *Br'er Rabbit* and sly, old *Br'er Fox* adventure stories).

So you see, "Atlanta Has It All" and we're hoping you'll share some of it with us in October by attending our conference on the **Many Facets of Computer Communications.**

Reserve your spot today.

—Lois Thuss
Conference Chairman

☐

Registration—1983 Conference of the IEEE Professional Communication Society

The registration fee is $170 for IEEE members and $195 for nonmembers, which includes admission to all sessions, two luncheons, and a copy of the *Conference Record.* Students and retirees may register for $85, which does not include meals or the *Record.* Extra meal tickets and copies of the *Record* can be purchased at the conference. Those presenting papers must register for the conference.

Send registration to
Leon C. Pickus
RCA Missile and Surface Radar
Naval Systems Dept. 127-326
Moorestown, NJ 08057

☐ Enclosed is my check for $ _____.
(Make check payable to IEEE PCS Conference.)

☐ I prefer to register later; please keep me informed.

Name _____ IEEE No. _____

Organization _____ Position _____

Mailing address _____

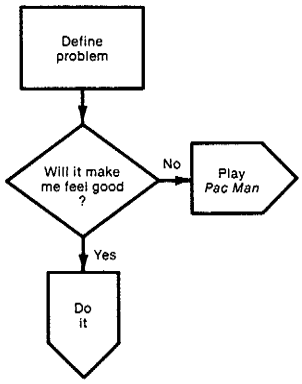
_____

Office phone _____ Home phone _____

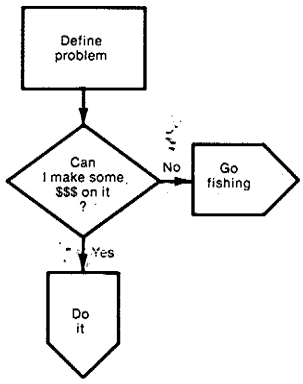
Flowchart Filosophy

Life as seen through the eyes of . . .

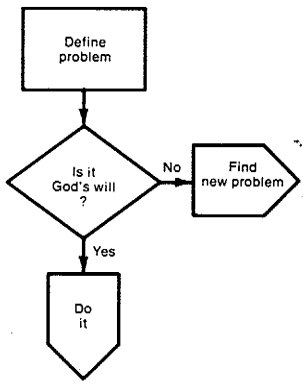
Teenager



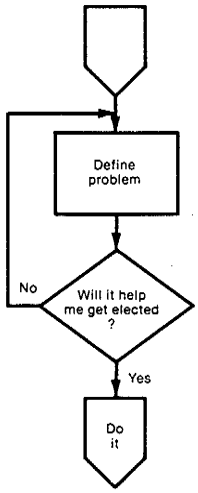
Salesman



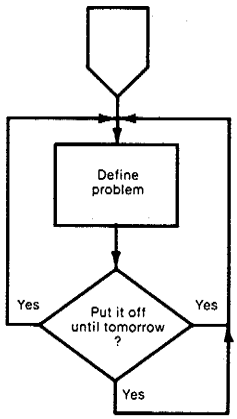
Religious Zealot



Politician



Procrastinator



Insight and interpretation by Marvin M. Neiditz of Western Electric Co. Greensboro, North Carolina

Newsletter
IEEE Professional Communication Society

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127 15TH AVE N W
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