



# IEEE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## 1995 PCS AWARDS

BY ELIZABETH KEYES

*Elizabeth Keyes was the Awards Committee chair for 1995.*

**I**PCC 95 in Savannah was the occasion for the annual presentation of PCS awards. This is our opportunity to recognize the contributions that particular individuals have made to the Professional Communication Society and to the field of technical communication.



*Elizabeth Keyes presents 1995 Goldsmith Award to Ron Blicq, standing in for Cheryl Reimold.*

### Goldsmith Award

The Alfred N. Goldsmith Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the field of technical communication and thus to the goals of PCS. This year the Goldsmith Award was presented to Cheryl Reimold. Through her writings, workshops, seminars, and presentations, Cheryl has helped a wide

variety of technical audiences realize the importance of effective communication and increase their own skills. As an AdCom member and chair of the Education Committee, Cheryl has taught courses for PCS at various corporations and worked to make other IEEE Societies aware of our course offerings.

Ron Blicq accepted the award in Cheryl's absence. As co-teacher of PCS courses, he noted Cheryl's unflagging energy and ability as a teacher to connect with her students in a way that enables her to provide each student with what he or she needs most.

For the past eight years, her PCS newsletter column, "Tools of the Trade," has offered valuable practical advice on how to improve communication skills to writers and non-writers alike. Her syndicated column, "The Language of Business," has received awards from the Society of Technical Communication and other

professional organizations. She is the author of five books and more than 200 articles.

Through her firm, PERC Communications, Cheryl has spent 16 years providing training, writing, and consulting services for corporations and government agencies in a variety of communication skills—including such topics as the art of listening and asking effective questions.

### Schlesinger Award

This was the first presentation of the new Emily K. Schlesinger Award. The Schlesinger Award recognizes outstanding service to the Society by individuals who have actively furthered technical and professional communication through their continued contribution to the Professional Communication Society.

The recipient of this first award was David Kemp for his outstanding work with PCS Chapters. Local Chapters are the core of PCS vitality and provide ongoing forums and support to members. Dave has revived the significance of the Chapters Coordinator position by encouraging and maintaining regular contact with each Chapter. He has also been instrumental in the restoration of dormant Chapters and in the formation of new Chapters. Because of his expertise and success in this area, Dave has become a regular speaker on Chapter relations at IEEE TAB and RAB forums.

Dave has been involved in IEEE activities since he was Student Branch chair in 1964. He went on to serve as Winnipeg Section secretary, treasurer, vice-chair, and chair; and then chaired the Region 7 (Canada) Conference and Membership Development Committees. He has been a PCS AdCom member since 1991 and previously

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## NEWSLETTER LOOKING FOR AN EDITOR

Reply to:

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(303) 541-0060

Newsletter editor David Nadziejka has expressed a need to devote more time to his primary job at Argonne National Laboratory, as well as to the heavy demands of a 3-year-old. During his two years as editor, David contributed much of his own writing and supervised the

design of the new two-color format. We will miss him and his resourcefulness.

The newsletter is published six times per year in the odd-numbered months. The copy deadline is approximately two months prior to the month of publication. The editor obtains and edits all content and oversees typesetting and page layout by an independent contractor. Printing and distribution are handled by the IEEE. PCS provides a token honorarium per issue. The editor must be, or must become, an IEEE Member. Please send expressions of interest and qualifications, as well as requests for more information, to Rudy Joenk (see left column). Please feel free also to communicate with David Nadziejka, [d.nadziejka@ieee.org](mailto:d.nadziejka@ieee.org).

### Technical Writers

From the business office to the emergency room, the doctor's office to the lab, SMS' integrated information systems continually meet the changing needs of healthcare environments and provide a vital communications link. It's no wonder Shared Medical Systems is recognized as the industry leader in North America and Europe.

While writing a broad range of assignments including reference manuals and on-line help systems, you'll utilize your 1-5 years of professional writing experience (computer systems/software assignments helpful). A Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Technical Writing or related discipline is essential. Familiarity with at least one programming language is necessary.

In the high tech corridor of Philadelphia, PA, SMS offers highly competitive compensation, an array of benefits and opportunities for professional development. For confidential consideration, please send your resume, with salary requirements to: **Dept. TS/TWN, Human Resources, Shared Medical Systems, 51 Valley Stream Parkway, Malvern, PA 19355, FAX (610) 219-8266. E-mail: [Human.Resources@shrmed.com](mailto:Human.Resources@shrmed.com)**  
**Diverse perspectives - equal opportunity, affirmative action.**

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## STUDENT ACTIVITY COORDINATOR NEEDED

The Professional Communication Society is looking for member volunteers to lead and coordinate the student activities of the Society. One of the important activities is the Student Papers Competition. For more information, communicate with Dave Kemp, 204 992-2494 (voice and fax), or [d.kemp@ieee.org](mailto:d.kemp@ieee.org).

### IEEE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SOCIETY

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RUDY JOENK, EDITOR

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## 1995 PCS AWARDS

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received three IEEE awards, most recently the 1990 Western Canada Council Silver Merit Award.

With degrees in electronics engineering technology and industrial management and administration, Dave has spent 30 years with the Manitoba Telephone System and its alliance partners in various manage-

ment, organization, customer service, research, and planning capacities. He is currently project manager of new business development.

The presentation of the Schlesinger Award was made by Emily Schlesinger, herself a past president of PCS and recipient of the Goldsmith Award. Dr. Schlesinger was introduced by Rudy Joenk who cited both her achieve-

ments and her inspiring support of many PCS members. Rudy said that she was responsible for starting his years of involvement in PCS activities. This was an unusual opportunity to see the importance that such continuity plays in building the PCS organization.

### Best Paper Award

The *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* is a valuable resource for all of us in technical communication,

whether in industry or academia. Rudy Joenk, chair of the PCS Editorial Advisory Committee, presented the annual Best Paper Award to Rod McIntosh Shand (in absentia) for his two-part article, "User Manuals as Project Management Tools," published in the June and September 1994 issues.

Rod's article presents new insights into the broad role of user manuals. An experienced programmer and documentation professional, Rod shows how a technical communicator's early involvement in the software development process can be used to ensure that the system works for its users, with the user manual as the needs definition and testing vehicle. In Part 1, the article outlines a solid research and theoretical background and, then, in Part 2 discusses practical implementation issues and guidelines, including how to respond to objections from management or colleagues—a commendable combination of theory and practice as rare as it is valuable.

With a degree in marine biology, Rod worked in the genetics field before moving to computer programming in 1979. His work has focused on the design, control, and repair of software projects. As an independent project consultant, he currently divides his time between research and consulting in Toronto.



*Emily Schlesinger presents the first Schlesinger Award to Dave Kemp.*

## CALENDAR 1996

### ADCOM MEETINGS

9 MARCH  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

7-8 JUNE  
SNOWBIRD, UTAH

21 SEPTEMBER  
SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

### SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION 43RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

5-8 MAY  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Contact: STC Office  
(703) 522-4114

### IPCC 96

18-20 SEPTEMBER  
SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

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# FORUM 95 LIVES UP TO ITS THEME

BY RON BLICQ

*PCS's representatives on the Forum 95 organizing committee were Lisa Moretto of Myrtle Beach, SC (program), and Ron Blicq of Winnipeg, MB (publicity and new media).*

I have been writing about Forum 95 in the *PCS Newsletter* for more than two years. In this issue I can now report that the conference was an outstanding success! There were 320 participants from 21 countries, ranging from Australia, Korea, China, South Africa, the U.S.A., Russia, Canada, the U.K., to most of continental Europe and Scandinavia.

The theme of the conference, which was held in Dortmund, Germany, from November 13 to 15, was "Disappearing Borders." This theme was present right from the start, when four communication-oriented societies joined forces to plan and organize the event over a three-year period, often meeting in each other's country, including twice in the U.S. They were the **IEEE Professional Communication Society** (which, in the fall of 1992, originally proposed holding an international communication conference in Europe), the **ISTC** of the U.K., **STIC/QTD** of The Netherlands, and **tekcom** of Germany.

Forum conferences are held under the auspices of INTECOM, the international association of technical communication societies, of which PCS is a member.

## A Conference With a Difference

The strategy for the three-day event differed markedly from the strategy used for the conferences we normally see in North America. The first day was reserved solely for the 90 presenters (in Forum terms they are called activators), whose expenses for the day, including their accommodations, were paid by the conference.

Ulf L. Andersson of Sweden, who devised the Forum concept in 1974, led the sessions, during which he and experienced activators from previous Forums showed the new activators how to prepare their flip charts and then observed them while they practiced presenting their information.

In Forum terms, presenting one's information does not mean delivering a paper monologue-style. Instead, the activator lists a few key points on a flip chart —

points that often are posed as questions — and spends just a few moments introducing his or her ideas before encouraging the audience to join in a dialogue or polylogue. As suggestions bounce back and forth, the activator lists ideas that evolve on a second flip chart.

The audience is not static, either. Between 10 and 12 activators present their ideas simultaneously for 45 minutes in a large room, with small partitions separating the activators. There are no chairs and the audience moves from activator to activator, depending on what topics interest them. These sessions — there were nine of them — are called "Idea Markets."

If a topic generates a lot of interest, a second session is arranged in a separate room so that participants can explore the topic further. These continuing sessions are called "Sort and Build" or "Brainstorming" groups, and it's from these groups that the most innovative ideas often evolve.

## Forum Publications

Two weeks before the conference, each registered participant received a 300-page handbook titled "Forum 95 Preseedings" (*yes, the spelling is correct*). It contained each activator's ideas, ideally not presented as a paper but as a series of thoughts and questions that would capture participants' interest and draw them to the activators they want to listen to and engage in a dialogue/polylogue.

In March 1996, about four months after the conference, each participant will receive a second conference publication, this time called the "Postharvest." In it, each activator will summarize the outcome of his or her session in the Idea Market, and from the Sort and Build groups and Brainstorming activity if the session progressed further.

## "Disappearing Borders" Accentuated

Two 90-minute videoconferences were held during Forum 95, one between Dortmund and Beijing, and one between Dortmund and Moscow. (See boxes for the panel members.) The speakers at each

node spoke about documentation practices and problems they experience in their country, and particularly focused on translation problems between people of different cultures.

Whereas the speakers in Beijing and in Moscow were all from one country, the speakers in Dortmund were from several. For example, for the Beijing videoconference, the Dortmund panel members came from the U.S., Canada, France, the U.K., and Germany.

Each videoconference ended with an exchange of phone and fax numbers, a

promise to hold the door open for further communication, and a wave of hands and a lump in the throat as we said goodbye and the images faded from the TV monitors.

#### Other Activities

Forum 95 included three sessions focusing on new media, during which speakers from Germany, the U.S., and Canada demonstrated how they were using projection systems and LCD panels with advanced features to create enterprising presentations.

A television crew from WDR—the West German radio station—was present

(continued on page 6)

## DORTMUND-BEIJING VIDEOCONFERENCE PANELISTS

November 14, 1995

### • B E I J I N G •

- Diana Wan, ILMDOC, Beijing  
(*Moderator*)
- Wang Hong Cheng, China Machinery Ministry
- Zhu Chang Gen, China Hydraulic-Pressure Seal Industry Association
- Liu Dingguo, Tianwei Fuel Injection Equipment Inc.
- Yan Qing, Automobile Division of Machinery Industry Ministry

### • D O R T M U N D •

- Ron Blicq, RGI International, Canada  
(*Moderator*)
- Jean-Paul Bardez, CRT, Fontenay-sous-Bois, France
- Gerry Gentle, AST, Letchworth, Great Britain
- Carel Jansen, Utrecht University, The Netherlands
- Volker Stauch, Mercedes-Benz, Stuttgart, Germany

## DORTMUND-MOSCOW VIDEOCONFERENCE PANELISTS

November 15, 1995

### • M O S C O W •

- Otto Achilles, Director, Service Technology and Training, Mercedes-Benz, (*Moderator*)
- Ivan Ivanochin Ubin, Director of All-Russian Centre for Translation of Scientific and Technical Literature and Documentation
- Anatolij Peschkilev, Senior Engineer, Mercedes-Benz Avtomobili AOST of Russia
- Thomas Bauer, Engineer, Mercedes-Benz
- Alexander Shmailov, Engineer and Translation/Interpreter, Mercedes-Benz

### • D O R T M U N D •

- Ron Blicq, RGI International, Canada  
(*Moderator*)
- Tom Warren, Oklahoma State University, U.S.A.  
(*INTECOM President*)
- Carl-Heinz Gabriel, Marinetechnik, Hamburg, Germany
- Pieter van der Poort, BSO/HPCC Den Haag, The Netherlands
- Jean-Paul Bardez, CRT, Fontenay-sous-Bois, France

throughout the conference. They recorded all the activities, including both video-conferences. On the first and second evenings they edited the previous day's activities into a six-minute overview, complete with narration, and screened it the following day. Both of these videos will be available for purchase by participants, as well as a more comprehensive 30-minute Forum 95 overview the television team will create during the next two months.

There were also networking lunches, an extensive exhibition hall, and three evening

events: a visit to a traditional beer cellar (for a meal as well as sampling the goods); a banquet and dance; and attendance at a production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Starlight Express*.

The 40 participants from the U.S. and Canada can attest to the enthusiasm, originality, and interactivity they experienced during Forum 95. When Forum 2000 rolls around — for Forum conferences are held only once every five years — make sure you're there!

## ADCOM WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

**T**he Administrative Committee (AdCom) invites comment from PCS members about any of the Society's activities. All the members have a standard-form electronic alias at the IEEE that automatically forwards e-mail to the member's actual electronic address. You can address the AdCom as a whole at [pcs.adcom@ieee.org](mailto:pcs.adcom@ieee.org), or the members individually at the following addresses:

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If you would like to hear from the AdCom occasionally, send your e-mail address to [p.seesing@ieee.org](mailto:p.seesing@ieee.org).

Members are always welcome at AdCom meetings.

## NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

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Contributions are welcome.

E-mail files and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred.

Newsletter publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
May/June 1996	8 Mar. 1996
July/Aug. 1996	10 May 1996
Sep./Oct. 1996	5 July 1996
Nov./Dec. 1996	6 Sep. 1996
Jan./Feb. 1997	8 Nov. 1996
Mar./Apr. 1997	10 Jan. 1997

CURMUDGEON'S CORNER



JOAN G. NAGLE

*Joan Nagle has been active in PCS since 1985. She has edited the Society's Transactions and has served on the Editorial Board of the IEEE Press. She is currently working on her second book.*

*You have (or should have) your own pharmacopeia for treating bad-writing nausea.*

# AUNT JOAN'S BETTER-THAN-SNAKE-OIL ELIXIR FOR THE CURE OF ALMOST ANYTHING

The German news service *Deutsche Presse Agentur* reports that the newest trend in Beijing is the "oxygen bar," where young professionals can unwind at the end of a hard day in an increasingly polluted city by inhaling fresh air at about \$6 an hour. Special herbs and spices, some of which are reputed to have medicinal qualities, can be mixed in at a higher price.

Well, now. How many hours would you like, and will you have parsley, sage, rosemary, or thyme?

I've been to Beijing, and I know what they're talking about. This is a good idea. But there are other kinds of pollution, besides that owing to cigarettes, non-emission-controlled vehicles, and coal-briquette-burning space heaters, that make us sick to the soul. And other remedies.

- *Dirty writing* Professional communicators in the editing atmosphere have to breathe a lot of this. Noxious grammar, poisonous syntax, carcinogenic vocabulary. So go home and read Jane Austen for an hour or two. Or the Book of Common Prayer. Or Winston Churchill, or T.S. Eliot.

One of my favorite pure-air writers is Frederick Buechner (quoted in this column on at least one other occasion). Take this paragraph, for example:

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.\*

Elementary words, familiar imagery, significant thought. You have (or should have) your own pharmacopeia for treating bad-writing nausea.

- *Dirty music* I'm not talking about rap lyrics here, although they certainly qualify.

\* Buechner, Frederick, *Wishful Thinking*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

In any case, music is a matter of taste. But there must be something to be inferred from the recent craze for Gregorian chant, and for the enthusiasm generated by the "Amadeus" score. People who may never have heard these kinds of music, in all their purity of expression, find some kind of therapy there.

If your office is filled with Muzak, go home and play a good CD. Try the Bach Goldberg Variations; it will clear your head wonderfully.

- *Dirty surroundings* Dudley Kay, Director of Book Publishing at IEEE Press, says that *Piscataway* (as in New Jersey, site of IEEE operations) is an old Indian word for *industrial park*. Do you work in an industrial park, or a drab classroom, or a cluttered cubicle? Have a heady dose of nature if you can get it. We can't all step outside and gaze at Mt. Rainier, but we can buy a single rose on the way home. Or spend an evening with a book of Ansel Adams photographs.

- *Dirty food* Again the need to clarify terms: I'm not talking contaminated. Merely disgusting, especially when taken in large doses. Have you had too many Big Macs, vending machine cheese crackers, cheap doughnuts? Try a perfectly roast chicken, or a perfectly ripe pear, or homemade bread with real butter. (Hey, this is a medical emergency; forget the cholesterol count for once.)

After a particularly polluted day at work, I used to go to the local Japanese restaurant for therapy. Just walking in the door made me feel better. The decor was pure and simple ... not necessarily what I want to spend my life in, but an oxygen bar for the troubled spirit. The music was a one-line lute melody, the waitresses quiet on sandal-shod feet, the food basic and exquisitely served.

After a while I could overdose on all this serenity. (As even oxygen is poisonous when overdone.) But when my system was clogged by the brown haze of the workaday world, like the brown haze over Beijing, it was a wonderful one-hour cure.

It cost a little more than \$6. But worth it.

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S FATHER, THE TECHNICAL WRITER

BY RONALD J. NELSON

Robert Louis Stevenson, famed author of *Treasure Island* (1883) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), as well as a multitude of other works in various genres, came from a long line of civil engineers. His father, his uncles, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather were all engineers to the Board of the Northern Lights in Edinburgh and gained world-wide recognition for their work in lighthouse construction. They were known for their dedication and high standards of workmanship.

Thomas Stevenson, father of Robert Louis Stevenson, was especially respected as an innovator in lighthouse illumination and in experiments to determine the force of the waves. He made significant contributions in both these fields with the invention of a holophotal apparatus for distributing naturally diverging rays of light over any azimuthal angle and with a "Marine Dynamometer," a self-regulating apparatus for determining the force of the waves.

The technical writings of Thomas Stevenson include a number of works that are now, lamentably, out of print (but available through libraries): "The Design and Construction of Harbours" (1864), "Lighthouse Construction and Illumination" (1881), "On Dipping and Apparent Lights or Sunk Reefs and Pierheads of Harbours" (1854), "Proposals for the Illumination of Beacons and Buoys" (1870), and "Tides and Coastworks" (no date). Each of these documents encapsulates profoundly important principles for modern technical writers, among

them a strong commitment to purpose and audience — those concerned with the safety of mariners, with the adequacy of structures to withstand the potency of the waves, and with other neglected behind-the-scenes workers.

Thomas Stevenson's writings convey a sure sense of professionalism that emerges through his (1) clear writing, (2) unassailable logic, (3) thoroughness of treatment of subject matter, (4) conscientious attention to both detail and the larger picture, (5) admission of failed experiments along with successes, (6) orientation of the reader at every turn, (7) use of apt anecdotes, examples, and research, (8) unpretentious, even humble tone, and (9) frequent qualifications within his statements, as if to ensure absolute fidelity to the facts of the situation, among other admirable characteristics.

Stevenson's technical writings are, despite the occasional overly long sentence and gap between subject and verb, quite readable even today. There is a timeless quality about them that reassures the reader that here indeed is a competent, dedicated scientist whose genuine attempts to solve serious problems can be trusted. Integrity pervades the very texture of his writings. In an age of media hype, questionable ethics, information overload, and insistence on instant gratification of every need, the modern technical writer or communicator would do well to return to the satisfying voice of one concerned with sustained efforts in the realm of creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving.

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*Integrity pervades  
the very texture of  
his writings.*

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## LATE NEWS

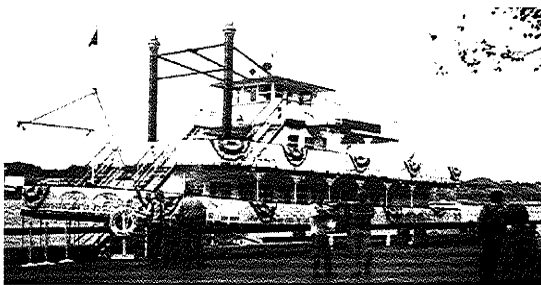
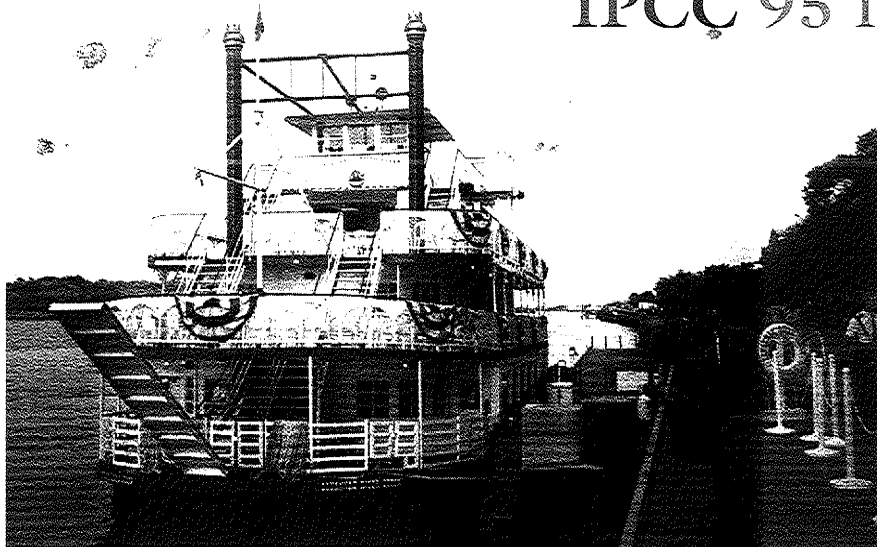
PCS AdCom member and Chapter Coordinator Dave Kemp was elected IEEE Regional Director-Elect for Region 7 (Canada) for 1996-1997. He will serve as Regional Director and president of IEEE Canada for 1998-1999. Congratulations, Dave!

## CHAPTER CHATTER

Three potential Chapters are being considered: Atlanta, Dallas, and Charleston. If you're interested in becoming involved or would like to see a Chapter in your area, communicate with Dave Kemp, 204 992-2494 (voice and fax), or [d.kemp@ieee.org](mailto:d.kemp@ieee.org).



# IPCC 95 IN SAVANNAH, GA



## ADCOM PROFILES

## ROGER GRICE

*Roger Grice is the  
PCS vice president  
for 1996*

**R**oger is a "work-in-progress." He retired from the IBM Corporation after a long career as an information developer focusing on large-system documentation, information usability, and online information. He is now president of Roger Grice Associates, Inc., a consultancy specializing in technical communication, information usability, and seminars on usability and interface design. He is also an adjunct professor of technical communication at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and an instructor of electrical engineering at the State University of New York's College at New Paltz.

Roger is a Senior Member of the IEEE and has been a member of PCS since 1982. A member of the AdCom for much of that time, he served as program manager for IPCC 85, IPCC 86, and IPCC 95; he is general manager for IPCC 96 (to be held in Saratoga Springs, NY, September 18-20, 1996). He was recently elected vice presi-

dent of PCS for 1996. He received the Alfred N. Goldsmith Award in 1988.

Roger holds a B.S. degree in electrical engineering from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now Polytechnic University), an M.S. degree in computer science from Union College, and a Ph.D. degree in communication and rhetoric from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

In addition to his IEEE activities, Roger is active in the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and was elected an STC Fellow in 1995.

When not busy with consulting, teaching, or professional activities, Roger enjoys leisure time with his long-suffering wife, Teri; his children, daughter Laura and her husband Nick, and daughter Kathleen and her husband Mike; his granddaughters, Brianna and Carissa; and his springer spaniel, Maggie.

## GEORGE HAYHOE

*George Hayhoe served  
as general manager  
of IPCC 95*

**G**eorge Hayhoe, a Senior Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the IEEE Professional Communication Society, has been a member of the PCS AdCom for two years. He was general manager for IPCC 95 held in Savannah, GA, last September.

In his former corporate life as project leader of a software documentation team for Westinghouse Savannah River Company, George's professional interests included print and online software documentation, software and document usability, and user interface design. He holds a Ph.D. degree in English from the University of South Carolina and previously served as assistant director of the writing program and director of the writing lab at Virginia Tech.

George now heads his own technical communication services company, George Hayhoe Associates, in Aiken, SC. In its first six months, his new company provided consulting services to a major corporation

on a proposal for business worth \$6 billion, produced marketing materials for an electrical engineering services consultancy, and training for academic and business clients. He is currently broadening the range of services provided to include proposal and report writing, consulting and training in effective use of electronic mail, and the ISO 9000 certification process.

George is an Associate Fellow and member of the Society for Technical Communication's South Carolina chapter. He is in his second year as assistant to the president of STC for competitions, and recently became editor of STC's journal, *Technical Communication*. He served as Society secretary from 1992 to 1994.

He was also principal author of a white paper on the future of academic programs in technical communication. The white paper, which grew out of a joint workshop of industry and academic representatives with STC's board of directors, appeared as a guest editorial in the IQ94 issue of *Technical Communication*.

## RICHIE ROBINSON

*Richie Robinson is leading constitution and bylaws revision.*

**R**ichie Robinson, a PCS past president, has been an IEEE and PCS member since 1958. He has been a member of the PCS AdCom for 20 years, and served as Ways and Means Chair, Membership Chair, Conference Chair, Meetings Chair, and vice president before being elected president. During his tenure as Membership Chair, PCS consistently ranked among the top three Societies in membership growth. Currently, he is leading the PCS *ad hoc* committee for revision of the constitution and bylaws. In 1983, Richie was awarded the PCS Alfred N. Goldsmith Award "for outstanding contributions to engineering communication."

Richie received a B.S. degree in physics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1956 and worked as an associate engineer at General Dynamics (San Diego, CA) and as a technical writer at Raytheon (Andover, MA) before returning to RPI to study technical communication. After receiving his M.S. degree, he served as a publications engineer/senior publications engineer at Hazeltine and Unisys (then Sperry), where he was primarily involved in developing technical manuals for complex electronic hardware.

Richie joined Grumman's Presentations Services group in 1968 as an editor, and

received subsequent promotions to senior editor, group leader, supervisor, and manager. The Presentations Services organization was responsible for preparing corporate marketing literature, proposals, reports, visual aids, and miscellaneous graphics, and Richie was involved in all of those areas.

In recent years, he was especially involved in converting his department to computer technology, in developing corporate presentation standards, and in applying the corporate total quality program to the presentations function. In late 1994, shortly after the merger of Grumman into the Northrop Grumman Corporation, Richie took advantage of an early retirement program.

As the culmination of his career in technical communication, Richie was recently notified that he is to be listed in the 26th edition of *Who's Who in the East*. Now, in addition to maintaining interest in his profession by continued activity in the Professional Communication Society, he hopes to devote more time to his primary avocation of skiing (past president of Miramar Ski Club and current certified amateur ski instructor), to travel, and, if he finds the time, to some much-needed maintenance on his home.

## PCS LOOKING FOR TREASURER UNDERSTUDY

*Reply to:*

*Bill Kehoe*

*Tel: (301) 953-6000,  
ext. 7944;*

*Fax: (301) 953-5937*

*w.kehoe@ieee.org*

PCS is looking for someone to be an understudy for the treasurer of the Society. Bill Kehoe, who has been the treasurer for almost a decade, wants to talk with candidates who might have an interest in this key position.

The treasurer submits an annual budget of \$175,000 and is responsible for payment of the Society's expenses. The treasurer also implements the payment of funds as

directed by the Administrative Committee (AdCom) and may help with aspects of meeting and conference planning.

An accounting background is not needed, but attention to detail is a must. This is an opportunity for professional growth and to work with a diverse board of communication professionals. For further information, please contact Bill.

# INTELLIGIBLE TRANSPARENCIES

BY RUDY JOENK

*...ask any audience  
whether artistry out-  
weighs legibility.*

When there's no graphic artist, no desk-top publishing, no time ... There are two principles to remember for making useful visual aids, particularly those large transparencies for viewgraph projectors. There are dozens of rules and guidelines for implementing and refining different kinds of visual aids and for making them attractive, but there are only two principles: **comprehensibility** and **legibility**.

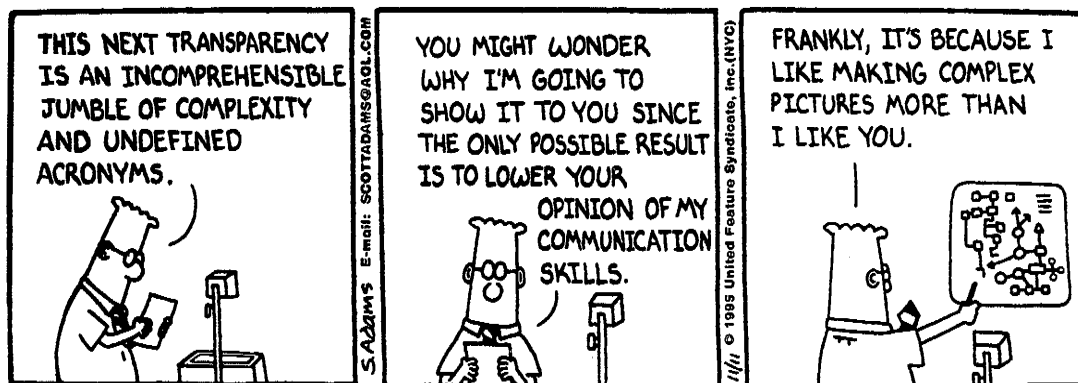
First, get your thoughts in order. Isolate the key points of your message. Then slash, cut, trim—and edit. Visual aids aren't a substitute for the printed page. The observer can't annotate, highlight, or underline them or put them away for review and interpretation later. (Prepare handouts if there is a need for reference or study material.) Choose only key words,

phrases, graphic trends—no sentences, paragraphs, whole memos. If you also stay away from acronyms and jargon, you'll be well on the way to creating comprehensible transparencies.

Second, turn away from your typewriter and take up a big, thick-tipped marking pen. If your pen strokes are at least a couple of millimeters wide, you'll have to work hard not to produce legible foils. Don't worry about your penmanship; ask any audience whether artistry outweighs legibility. Typewriter fonts do not have adequate stroke width for easy reading at a distance. Pin your transparencies on a wall and try reading them from at least 10 feet away.

Summary: For visual aids, simpler is better and larger is necessary.

**DILBERT** by Scott Adams



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## ADVERTISING

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nicate with Susan Schneiderman at the IEEE Service Center, (908) 562-3946 or [s.schneiderman@ieee.org](mailto:s.schneiderman@ieee.org). The publisher reserves the right to reject any advertising.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE



CHERYL REIMOLD

# PREPARING OUTSTANDING PRESENTATIONS

## Part 1: Understanding Your Audience

A presentation is a great chance to further your career. The reason is simple: Most presentations are ill conceived and poorly delivered. So, if you can become one of the few who do it right, you'll stand out like a shining beacon in a dark wasteland. People will pick you for key projects because they can count on you to sell the work at presentation time.

In this series, we look at the principles that enable you to prepare outstanding, career-boosting presentations.

### Your Ultimate Arbiter: The Audience

Your starting point, and the key to strong preparation, is a thorough understanding of your listeners, including their needs and limitations. Great presentations are radical in their focus on the audience. They address real people with real needs and ask them for a real response. Poor presentations, including many that seem quite polished, play out in thin air, removed from the audience, in an abstract space of ideas. Because they don't address real people, they rarely get a real response, either.

Your first job, then, is to understand clearly (1) who the audience is, (2) what you want them to *do* or *believe*, and (3) what the important audience *needs* and *interests* are in this situation. Thinking about these three things will lead to a strong *main message* and possible *key points* that matter to the audience.

### An Example

In a presentation skills seminar, one engineer gave a well structured, informative presentation on a certain computerized system intended to replace error-prone manual control. However, when we discussed the presentation in detail, it turned out to be totally misdirected. The talk was to be given to operators, who were resisting the new system because it was unfamiliar and not yet fully functional. In fact, the system needed fine tuning so that it would measure only the *relevant* process

variables. And the people who knew best what was relevant were the operators.

So, the real purpose of the talk was to persuade the operators to support the new system and contribute what they knew. A theoretical "information" talk describing the new system in some detail could never achieve that purpose. How could the presenter do it better?

He would have to begin with a clear understanding of his own main purpose and the key points that speak to the needs and interests of the audience. This is what he should get on paper before going any farther with the presentation:

*Purpose:* Get operators to (1) try the new system and (2) tell what they view to be the most relevant process variables.

*Audience needs:* Appreciation, comfort, contribution to success, less conflict with management, sense of importance, support.

*Main message:* I would appreciate your help with the new control system we've installed. (Need met: appreciation.) The system will save you a lot of time-consuming and tiring work, such as climbing on top of big vessels to inspect them visually. (Need met: comfort.) It will also lead to less downtime and fewer quality problems. (Needs met: contribution to success, less conflict with management.) However, to make it work, I need your input, because you are the ones who have the knowledge that we must still program into the system. (Need met: sense of importance.)

### Possible Key Points

- The system can measure all kinds of process variables—but we have to set it up so that it measures only the *relevant* ones. We need your ideas on what those variables are. (Need met: importance.)
- The system will save you a lot of time and effort—but to get these benefits, we need to start *using* and *testing* it. (Need met: comfort.)

(continued on page 15)

*Begin with clear understanding of main purpose and key points that speak to audience needs.*

## VIRTUAL LEAFING

BY STEVE HANNAFORD

*Steve Hannaford is editor and publisher of the Prepress Business Observer, a newsletter about the business of the graphic arts.*

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*Subscription information: (206) 628-2321.*

Contrary to the old saw, you can judge a book by its cover. We do it all the time. More precisely, we judge a book—or any piece of printed material—by picking it up, looking it over, and quickly leafing through it. So far, the electronic publishing world has not found a way to allow for anything similar. As digital publications become a more and more popular way of delivering data, this problem is growing increasingly painful.

Don't get me wrong. I send and receive lots of information digitally, and there can be no doubt that these pathways will replace major areas of traditional publishing. But at this early stage, there are still some major obstacles to overcome. The old lament about not being able to bring your electronic document into the bathroom may be easy to solve, as miniaturization and other technical advances bring us hand-held electronics that are smaller, lighter, and more legible. The big disadvantage of electronic publication may be its impenetrability, its resistance to a rapid evaluation.

After all, the whole point of good publication design is enticing us to read on. Whether at the most flashy level, with lavish color photos and illustration, or in the subtlest way, by careful typography, a well published book or magazine is trying to pull us in.

This openness to judgment is a major factor, because we're all inundated with printed materials. (Almost everyone I know stands over the trash can winnowing the day's mail.) How often do we browse through a magazine to see whether the articles need to be read at once, stowed away for later perusal, or safely ignored? What articles in the newspaper do we pass by and which do we read? A rich set of conventions has developed to facilitate thumbing and leafing.

Type size, length of paragraphs, amount of white space, number of illustrations, size of headers—all these are fingerposts that tell us about the text before we read the

first word. Then there are all kinds of conventions of publishing whose very formatting sends messages: inside dust jacket, table of contents, glossary and index, footnotes.

But it's not just page design. There are all kinds of tactile hints that allow us to appraise written material. The binding, from Morocco leather to ridged recycled cardboard to high-gloss paper, tells us a lot about the contents. Think about size, too. My bookshelf contains everything from Lilliputian dictionaries that fit in the hollow of my hand to oversized atlases and coffee table books. We make presumptions at once as to the weightiness and the thoroughness of these works.

Electronic publishing is efficient, economical, and flexible. But I find it almost impossible to tell the stuff I should read from the junk I needn't bother to. Let's take CD-ROMs as an example. All CD-ROMs look pretty much the same, especially out of the package. No matter how good or bad they are, CD-ROMs require us to load and mount them, double-click them, and then work our way through them. Most have a few seconds of opening credits; then we have to start navigating to find out about them.

How can I get a sense of an electronic publication without a major time investment? File size is not much of a help, since images consume so much space relative to text. It's hard to judge how substantial the information is without several minutes of navigating or searching. For example, if I have a French-English dictionary in printed form, I can get an idea of its completeness simply by its weight and text density. On CD-ROM, I'll have to spend time exploring to see whether I have the equivalent of the pocket dictionary or the unabridged scholarly version.

For all these reasons, most computer veterans I know have stacks of unopened CD-ROMs next to their computers. I must have dozens. Why? It takes me 15 minutes even to browse through one, and unless I have a serious motivation, I won't

*(continued on page 15)*

## TRANSACTIONS LOOKING FOR AN EDITOR

For more information,  
please communicate with

Mike Markel,  
renmarke

@idbsu.idbsu.edu,  
(208) 385-3088, or

Rudy Joenk,  
r.joenk@ieee.org  
(303) 541-0060.

**T**ransactions editor Mike Markel has decided to doff his editorial hat in mid-1996, after three years of outstanding leadership and several leading-edge topical issues, and return fully to academic life — Director of Technical Communication in the Department of English at Boise State University. Reluctantly, therefore, we announce that the editorship of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* is open and that we are seeking candidates, not only to carry on Mike's work but also to establish new goals and achieve new successes.

The *Transactions* is a refereed, archival journal, published quarterly. The editor is responsible for planning issues; securing, reviewing, and editing previously unpublished material; coordinating with the associate editors and with the IEEE production services; and managing expenses. Of these, planning and obtaining good manuscripts is not only the most difficult task but also the key to maintaining a successful *Transactions*. The editor is expected to uphold the high standards and comply with the policies of the

Professional Communication Society and the IEEE. He or she is also expected to attend Administrative Committee meetings and to be or become an IEEE member.

At least one day per week is an estimate of the average time required, with variations occurring during the publishing cycle. There is an honorarium, but an employer's backing is extremely helpful — if not crucial — for release time, administrative support, postage, telephone, text-processing and e-mail equipment, and travel expenses.

If you are interested, please e-mail a letter expressing your interest and ideas, along with a resume and supporting materials, to Rudy Joenk. All applications will be acknowledged. The deadline is 1 May 1996.

The new editor will be appointed soon thereafter, in time for a cross-over period between editors. Mike Markel will complete the December 1996 issue and the new editor will take over the March 1997 issue, which goes to production about 1 December 1996.

## VIRTUAL LEAFING

(continued from page 14)

do it. (I also have a pile of "informational" videotapes next to my TV, but that's another story.)

Granted, we are still in the incunabular stage of electronic publishing. Skimming through early books, with their impenetrable blocks of black Gothic type, would have been no treat, I admit. And there's no doubt that the new paperless media can contain elements — like sound and motion — that no book or pamphlet can match. But for the moment, the speed and convenience of electronic delivery are countered by the inconvenience and slowness of evaluating them.

## PREPARING PRESENTATIONS

(continued from page 13)

- As I'll show you, the system is easy to use. I'll be glad to answer any questions, and I'll also be available to help with any problem you might have when actually using the system. (Need met: support.)

With this outline, the presenter has the basic material that he can then shape into a successful, audience-structured presentation. Remember, "If you want to please people, you must please them in their own way." — *Lord Chesterfield*

Next time, we'll see just what the proper "shape" or structure is and how it grows out of the audience's limitations.

## PCS APPOINTS ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

BY MARK HASELKORN

At its September meeting in Savannah, the PCS Administrative Committee (AdCom) created an *ad hoc* Accreditation Committee.

This committee is charged with addressing two questions: (1) Should PCS undertake an accreditation process for technical communication programs in conjunction with the IEEE and ABET (the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) or RAC (the Related Accreditation Commission for programs related to engineering)? (2) If yes, what is the best procedure to accomplish this?

The committee initially has four members—Mike Goodman (chair) of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Marj Davis of Mercer University, Leslie Olsen of the University of Michigan, and Mark Haselkorn of the University of Washington.

Mercer, Michigan, and Washington are universities where the department of technical communication is in the engineering school.

The committee will have discussions with other societies that have considered accreditation issues for technical communication, particularly STC (the Society for Technical Communication) and CPTSC (the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication). There will be discussions with ABET/RAC and IEEE. (There are two ABET commissions in which the IEEE has representation: the Engineering Accreditation Commission and the Technology Accreditation Commission.

For more information, communicate with Prof. Michael Goodman, *goodman@alpha.fdu.edu*, or 201 593-8709.

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