The following articles on technical communication have appeared recently in other journals. The abstracts are prepared by volunteer journal monitors. If you would like to contribute, contact Sherry Southard at southards@ecu.edu.

“Recent and Relevant” does not supply copies of cited articles. However, most publishers supply reprints, tear sheets, or copies at nominal cost. Lists of publishers’ addresses, covering nearly all the articles we have cited, appear in Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory.

Thanks to J. A. Dawson, who helped me assemble the manuscript for “Recent & Relevant.”

### Collaboration

**Leadership roles, socioemotional communication strategies, and technology use of Irish and U.S. students in virtual teams**


“Global virtual teams provide numerous benefits for corporations employing virtual organizational forms and for individual teams and team members. However, virtual collaboration also presents some well-recognized challenges. A growing body of research has examined the process of virtual teaming and the challenges inherent in that process. This study seeks to address some of the gaps in the existing literature. Specifically, it examines leadership roles, socioemotional communication strategies, and the use of technology to establish relational links among team members. The study focuses on virtual-team collaboration among technical communication students at the University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, and at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.”

Gowri Saraf

**Managing the multiple meanings of organizational culture in interdisciplinary collaboration and consulting**


“Kuhn reminds us that although collaborating researchers in different disciplines may observe the same phenomena and use similar terms to describe it, their articulation of their findings can be radically dissimilar. Pointing out that what we see is largely dependent on what we have been trained to see, Kuhn cautions that individuals from two academic disciplines who work together will find themselves ‘always slightly at cross purposes.’ Consequently, even though consultants and clients may use the same word, the meaning of the word may be quite different. Such differences often affect the entire consultation process including the client’s expectations, as well as their willingness to accept the consultant’s recommendations. This article is a case study of the authors’ experiences when they were asked to engage in a cultural assessment of a student affairs department at a large Midwestern University.”

J. A. Dawson
Beyond persuasion: The rhetoric of negotiation in business communication


“This essay describes and provides a rationale for the Rhetoric of Negotiation as a useful frame for what is typically considered persuasion in business communication. It argues for a broader understanding of the opposition and draws from Eckhouse’s work on business communication as a competitive activity as well as Booth’s concept of Win-Rhetoric versus Listening-Rhetoric. Using illustrations from the author’s previous research, this commentary proposes that the Rhetoric of Negotiation is useful in business communication for both ethical and practical reasons.”

J. A. Dawson

Cognitive organization and identity maintenance in multicultural teams: A discourse analysis of decision-making meetings


“Measuring culture is a central issue in international management research and has been traditionally accomplished using indices of cultural values. Although a number of researchers have attempted to identify measures to account for the core elements of culture, there is no consensus on those measures. This article uses an alternative method—discourse analysis—to observe what actually occurs in terms of communication practices in intercultural decision-making meetings, specifically those involving U.S.-born native English speakers and participants from East Asian countries. Previous discourse studies in this area suggest that differences in communication practices may be attributed to power differentials or language competence. Our findings suggest that the conversation style differences we observed might be attributed to intergroup identity issues instead.”

J. A. Dawson

Do their words really matter: Thematic analysis of U.S. and Latin American CEO letters


“This study compares the annual report letters written by the CEOs of 30 U.S.-based companies and 24 Latin American-based companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Using a grounded theory approach, the authors thematically analyzed both sets of letters to ascertain common topics, stylistic (writing) features, and embedded cultural attributes. They found that although both sets of letters share much regulatory and financial information, the Latin American letters are characterized by a richer mix of topics, a more complex writing style, and evidence of cultural dimensions as conceptualized by the research of scholars such as Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall. Their work is founded on the belief that corporate documents exist to communicate more than factual information to their constituencies. Rather, the purpose of corporate writers is to influence public opinion and attitudes, particularly among potential investors, in ways that create support for organizational practices or undermine opposition to them.”

J. A. Dawson

The effects of supervisors’ verbal aggressiveness and mentoring on their subordinates


“This study examined the association between supervisors’ mentoring and verbal aggression and their subordinates’ perceived communication satisfaction, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The findings of the 200 full-time working adults who participated in the study supported prior research indicating positive relationships between mentoring behaviors by supervisors and their subordinates’ communication satisfaction and organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, and negative relationships between supervisors’ verbal aggression and their subordinates’ communication satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.”
Results of a regression analysis indicated that supervisors’ verbal aggression was a greater negative predictor of subordinates’ outcomes than was mentoring a positive predictor, supporting the presence of a negativity bias in the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Additionally, path analysis indicated that communication satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between supervisor mentoring and subordinate organizational commitment, whereas communication satisfaction served as a suppressor between mentoring and subordinate job satisfaction.”

J. A. Dawson

Examining the role of the communication channel interface and recipient characteristics on knowledge internalization: A pragmatist view

“This paper evaluates the role of reprocessability and symbol sets, two of the media capabilities identified in Media Synchronicity Theory, and different recipient characteristics on knowledge transfer. An experimental study manipulating the two specific channel interface characteristics was conducted to test the proposed model. Results indicate that symbol sets have a positive effect on knowledge possessed and knowledge applied. Motivation to learn significantly affected knowledge possessed and knowledge applied, while absorptive capacity was found to only influence knowledge possessed. The hypothesized relationships between reprocessability and knowledge internalization were marginally supported, and future research is suggested to address this issue.”

Gowri Saraf

The influence of high- and low-context communication styles on the design, content, and language of business-to-business Web sites

“Language and communication, especially high-versus low-context communication styles, have been shown to lead to differences in Web sites. Low-context communication provides the lowest common denominator for intercultural communication through the Internet by making messages linear, articulated, explicit, and therefore easier to understand in the absence of contextual clues. Based on theories of intercultural business communication and recent empirical studies, this article investigates how communication styles influence Web site design and content. It is hypothesized that, for the global audience, Web sites from low-context communication countries are easier to find, use colors and graphics more effectively, make navigation more user-friendly, contain more corporate and product information cues, and offer more contract- and relationship-related content than Web sites from high-context communication countries. This article also contributes to international business communication by investigating the choice of languages in business-to-business (B2B) Web sites. Empirical findings confirm the influence of high-versus low-context communication styles through systematic content analysis of 597 B2B Web sites in 57 countries. High-context communication style may be detrimental to the design of global Web sites, making them less readable, less effective in their use of colors and

Generation Y adoption of instant messaging: An examination of the impact of social usefulness and media richness on use richness

“By integrating Media Richness Theory, Channel Expansion Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), we study the postadoption use behavior of instant messaging. We developed the construct ‘use richness’ as a measure of the extent to which users use the media communication capacity after adoption and proposed a conceptual model of the antecedents of use richness. Through a field survey with 272 valid responses and structural equation modeling, we empirically tested our model and found that use richness is positively affected by perceived media richness, perceived usefulness, and perceived social usefulness.”

Gowri Saraf
J. A. Dawson

Language policies and communication in multinational companies: Alignment with strategic orientation and human resource management practices

“This article focuses on the degree of alignment among multinational company (MNC) strategic orientation, human resource management (HRM) practices, and language policies. On the one hand, the authors propose that the coherent, tight alignment among the HRM practices, language policies, and MNC strategic orientation, in terms of ethnocentricity, polycentricity, or geocentricity, is beneficial. On the other hand, they use international business research on language in MNCs to illustrate that what is good in theory is often more difficult in practice. For example, HRM practices and language policies in foreign subsidiaries may not be tightly aligned with the corporate-level activities, and some hybridization tends to occur, for example, because of contextual reasons in host countries.”

J. A. Dawson

Education

A comparison of engineering students’ reflections on their first-year experiences

Although this study does not focus specifically on technical writing courses, it provides context for what engineering students experience during their first year, when they may complete those courses. “The introduction of a mentoring program at the University of Notre Dame in which upperclass engineering students serve as a resource to first-year students was the focus of this study. A retrospective survey was administered to classes of sophomores and juniors ….

The survey was focused on impressions of the first-year engineering experiences motivated by a desire to assess the new program. This assessment was used to address research questions relating to students’ comfort approaching faculty/upperclass students and transition ….

Findings indicate: (1) students are more comfortable approaching upperclass students than faculty for advice in many situations, (2) no measurable student benefit could be concluded as a result of the mentoring program introduction, (3) gender differences exist in terms of a student’s comfort with their decision to stay in engineering, and (4) gender was not a statistically significant factor in predicting adjustment to engineering ….

Results support continued focus on increasing academic confidence in women and men entering engineering programs to support the adjustment to engineering. The affinity of students for obtaining advice from more experienced students rather than faculty suggests that support programs such as mentoring should aide that adjustment, yet it is clear that the success of such programs is sensitive to conditions that are not easily controlled.”

Sherry Southard

Constructive interference: Wikis and service learning in the technical communication classroom

“Four service-learning projects were conducted in technical communication courses using wikis. Results confirm previous findings that wikis improve collaboration, help develop student expertise, and enact a ‘writing with the community’ service-learning paradigm. However, wikis did not decenter the writing classroom as predicted by previous work. Instructors using wikis to scaffold client projects should calibrate standards for evaluation with students and client, and they may need to encourage clients to stay active on the wiki.”

Valerie J. Vance
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Valerie J. Vance
Developing technical communication education for Chinese industry professionals: Preliminary findings and suggestions


“Existing literature argues, in general terms, that China has a growing need for technical communication and technical communication education. Following up on these studies, this paper more closely examines China’s needs for technical communication education. Based on interviews with industry professionals and reviews of their writing samples, this paper seeks to find out who among the industry professionals in China needs technical communication, what their communication practices are, the areas in which they need education, and what U.S. technical communication professionals can do to help develop this education. Preliminary findings and suggestions as well as topics for future research are presented.”

Gowri Saraf

Does business writing require information literacy?


“Although the business community increasingly recognizes information literacy as central to its work, there remains the critical problem of measurement: How should employers assess the information literacy of their current or potential workers? In this article, we use a commercially available assessment to investigate the relationship between information literacy and the key business communication skill of business writing. Information literacy scores obtained prior to instruction predicted performance in an undergraduate, upper-division business writing course. Similar results emerged regardless of whether participants considered English their best language.”

J. A. Dawson

Foregrounding positive problem-solving teamwork: Awareness and assessment exercises for the first class and beyond


“In an advanced technical and professional writing course, a pair of in-class exercises integrates the teaching of teamwork with other class topics of project management and observation-based research. The first exercise introduces teamwork in a positive way, by raising awareness of strategies for solving problems successfully. The second exercise follows up on the first, focusing on assessment of problem-solving teamwork. The pair of exercises is memorable and effective, showing students in an engaging, thought-provoking way that they have control and responsibility for the success of their teamwork. The materials for conducting the exercises, provided here, encourage reflection and discussion.”

Kimberly C. Harper

Listening to students: A usability evaluation of instructor commentary


“Many students see instructor commentary as not constructive but prescriptive directions that must be followed so that their grade, not necessarily their writing, can be improved. Research offering heuristics for improving such commentary is available for guidance, but the methods employed to comment on writing still have not changed significantly, primarily because we lack sufficient understanding of how students use feedback. Usability evaluation is ideally equipped for assessing how students use commentary and how instructors might adapt their comments to make them more usable. This article reports on usability testing of commentary provided to students in an introductory technical writing course.”

Kimberly C. Harper
Response-to-complaint letter as a rhetorical genre

“Standard in many professional communications classrooms is the teaching of the general business letter and sometimes, more specifically, the complaint letter. This tutorial draws upon the scholarly research from professional communication, education, and business to address the methods of how to teach a response-to-complaint letter. I recommend a theory-based tutorial for the undergraduate professional communication classroom. This tutorial complements existing teachings on standard form-letter writing and could serve as a supplemental component to a marketing or management course.”

Gowri Saraf

Specific oral communication skills desired in new accountancy graduates

“International research findings and anecdotal evidence alike suggest that new accountancy graduates often begin their careers with inadequate oral communication skills. However, there is a lack of well-grounded empirical data concerning precisely what accountancy employers mean by ‘oral communication’ and what specific skills they value most highly. This article describes a research project investigating the importance of 27 oral communication skills for students intending to begin an accountancy career in New Zealand, as perceived by chartered accountancy professionals. It also examines how frequently accountancy employers are finding these desired skills in new graduates. The findings reported in this study offer important guidance concerning the oral communication skills that new graduates will find most useful in the New Zealand accountancy workplace and suggest useful directions for accountancy students internationally.”

J. A. Dawson

Student and faculty perceptions of engagement in engineering

This study does not address technical writing courses that engineering students complete, but it suggests context for teacher-student relationships and their definitions for the term engagement. “This study is designed to investigate how undergraduate engineering students and their faculty define engagement. While many researchers provide descriptions and suggestions that engagement is crucial to learning, there is no widespread, standard definition for engagement to guide engineering educators …. The purpose of this study is to begin to understand student engagement by examining how students and faculty viewed the term engagement as it relates to their engineering courses. The two key questions asked were (1) How do faculty and undergraduate students define engagement? and (2) How are their definitions similar or different? …. Students view engagement in terms of faculty enthusiasm for the subject and in teaching and the availability of faculty for out-of-class interactions. Faculty members believe that engagement rests with the students …. This study suggests that there is not a single definition of engagement for engineering students. Rather, engagement is both a process and an outcome. Faculty stimulate engagement by providing students with active learning experiences, conveying excitement and enthusiasm for their subject, and providing opportunities for student-faculty interactions. Students show their engagement by participating in class discussions, doing research projects, and interacting with their professors and peers.”

Sherry Southard

Technical communication internship requirements in the academic economy: How we compare among ourselves and across other applied fields

“This article reports a study of internship requirements in technical communication programs compared
with three established professions and one emerging profession that have certification or licensing requirements for practitioners. The study addresses three questions about technical communication internship programs: (1) Are internships offered as a way to fulfill program academic credit requirements? (2) If internships are offered, are they required or elective? (3) What are the minimum/maximum academic credits allowed for internships toward fulfillment of program requirements and the number of workplace hours of internship required? To answer these questions we focused on three elements of internship program management: academic credits, workplace hours per academic credit, and total workplace hours required. Our findings indicate that there is considerable disparity for these factors among programs in our field and that we lack criteria similar to those used in established professions for internships.”

Valerie J. Vance

**Ethical Issues**

*Ethical climate in government and nonprofit sectors: Public policy implications for service delivery*


“An important factor that leads governments to engage in public service contracts with nonprofit organizations is the belief that they share similar ethical and value orientations that will allow governments to reduce monitoring costs. However the notion of the existence of similarities in ethical climate has not been systematically examined. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the ethical climate in government and nonprofit sectors and to determine the extent to which similarities (and differences) exist in ethical climate dimensions. Using survey data and structural equation modeling technique, the factor structure equivalence and measurement invariance of the ethical climate in the two sectors are tested. Results indicate that while there is a significant overlap in shared perception of ethical climate dimensions, there are also key differences between the two sectors. The outcome of this research provides important preliminary insights for public policy makers in government to better understand the implications of using the nonprofit sector for service delivery.”

Christine Cranford

**Information Management**

*A coach approach to leadership: Empowering others during uncertainty and change*


“This article explores how managers can use the coach approach to empower and lead people through uncertainty and change and emerge stronger and ready to take on new business challengers …. [The author discusses] how the coach approach evolved …. The coach approach framework …. [and] shifting the focus from one to many.”

Sherry Southard

*Creating a customer survey*

Tilley, B. (2010). *Best Practices*, 12, 74–79. [Center for Information Development Management]

The author covers “selecting an e-survey software company, creating the survey, testing the survey, sending out the survey, parsing feedback, [and] making post-survey decisions.”

Sherry Southard

*How much does document conversion really cost?—A guide to conversion cost variables*


Because misconceptions about “how much it will cost to convert your documents to XML … [a task in
which] a multitude of factors interact to determine the per-page price of any conversion project .... [T]his paper's objective is to serve as a resource for commercial organizations that are planning an XML conversion or trying to determine whether documentation conversion may be a cost-effective option.”

Sherry Southard

Productivity counts: Measuring the effectiveness and productivity of your team members

Hackos, J. (2010). Best Practices, 12, 70–73. [Center for Information Development Management]

The author discusses ways to measure productivity .... “(1) The number of documents produced by our organization per year, including new and revised documents .... (2) the number of pages produced by our organization per year, new and revised, with a complexity weighting factor added in .... (3) the number of successful sets of functional information delivered to the users each year .... (4) the amount of rework staff members generate for themselves and everyone else on the support team .... [She explains] we can obviously measure productivity by looking at the output of our work effort. We can also measure the efficiency with which we perform our tasks .... (1) Record the time it takes to develop a document or complete a project from the beginning to the end of the information-development life cycle .... (2) The percentage of total project time spent on each milestone .... (3) The percentage of time spent on each key project task. You may also want to measure the percentage of time spent on key tasks.”

Sherry Southard

Recycled writing: Assembling actor networks from reusable content


“Drawing on a study of writers reusing content from one document to another, this study examines the rhetorical purpose of reuse. Writing reuse is predominantly studied through the literature on single sourcing and enacted via technologies built on single-sourcing models. Such theoretical models and derivative technologies cast reusable content as contextless and rhetorically neutral, a perspective that overlooks the underlying rhetorical strategies of reuse. The author argues for a new understanding of reuse as a rhetorical act of creating hybrid utterances that gather their rhetorical strength by assembling ever larger and denser actor networks.”

Kimberly C. Harper

Creating procedural discourse and knowledge for software users: Beyond translation and transmission


“Although most theorists agree that discourse creates meaning, they have not adequately described how this process emerges within the creation of procedural knowledge. This article explores how technical communicators in diverse settings based discourse decisions on their knowledge of (a) users, (b) organizational image and constraints, (c) software structure and features, and (d) genre conventions in order to create communication artifacts designed to help users develop procedural knowledge. The transformations in which they engaged indicated that these technical communicators were skilled in forming images in these four areas and then using these images as they created meaning in procedural discourse. In this process, they moved beyond merely translating or transmitting technical knowledge.”

Kimberly C. Harper

The effects of integrating on-going training for technical documentation teams


“The tools and techniques utilized in the technical communications profession are constantly improving and
changing. Information Technology (IT) organizations devote the necessary resources to equip and train engineering, marketing, and sales teams, but often fail to do so for technical documentation teams. Many IT organizations tend to view documentation as an afterthought; however, consumers of IT products frequently base their purchasing decisions on the end user documentation’s content, layout, and presentation. Documentation teams play a unique role in IT organizations as they help to build and create a public identity through end user manuals and the corporate website, as well as maintain intellectual knowledge through knowledge sharing and management. The technical communicator ‘makes sense’ of complex engineering specifications by creating user-friendly manuals for the layman. The practitioner who compiles and records this complex information is a valuable resource to any IT organization. Therefore, on-going training for technical documentation teams is essential to stay competitive in the fast-paced technical market. Technical communicators in IT organizations who only write end user manuals are becoming a rarity. Research indicates a marked trend toward technical writers in multiple roles and varied responsibilities that include web design and development, and business systems analysis functions. Although these added roles and responsibilities require training on some of the newer software tools and more complex programming tools, technical communicators are experiencing difficulty keeping pace with these tools. This article discusses technical documentation teams in IT organizations and provides an on-going training assessment to help technical documentation managers identify their team’s strengths and weaknesses. In addition, measures and results from a study conducted at eight IT organizations, are provided to show the effect of how the integration of on-going training for documentation teams enhances individual competency and improves team performance.”

Valerie J. Vance

### Safety warnings in tractor operation manuals, 1920–1980: Manuals and warnings

“This article studies the history of one of the most critical, unresolved problems in mechanized agriculture: Tractor operators do not read the operation manuals, particularly the safety warnings. The result: sustained death and injury of these operators for well over a century. The article tracks the emergence of warnings in tractor operator manuals found in the archives of the University of Nebraska Tractor Test Museum (1919–2007), describes efforts of manufacturers during this time to alert operators to dangers associated with tractors, and concludes with a summary of current research on tractor safety and the problem that remains unresolved: how to change the culture of farmers who use these implements, critical to agriculture production, to encourage them to read and follow safety practices.”

Valerie J. Vance

### Language

#### English or a local language in advertising: The appreciation of easy and difficult English slogans in the Netherlands

“Studies have demonstrated frequent use of English in international advertising, but little is known about
people’s preference for English versus local languages. This article empirically investigated the difficulty of the English language as a possible determinant of people’s preference for English or the local language. In an experiment, Dutch participants judged a number of car ads with English slogans that were pretested as easy or difficult to understand. They were subsequently asked to express a preference for either the English slogan or the Dutch equivalent. Results showed that easy-to-understand English slogans were appreciated better than difficult-to-understand English slogans. Moreover, the degree of difficulty in comprehension of the English slogans affected participants’ preference for English. English was preferred to Dutch when it was easy to understand; when it was difficult to understand, English was appreciated as much as the Dutch equivalent. In conclusion, the experiment provides empirical support for the role of comprehension in the preference for and appreciation of English in international advertising.”

J. A. Dawson

Bring workplace assessment into business communication classrooms: A proposal to better prepare students for professional workplaces


“To help students better understand and be better prepared for professional workplaces, the author suggests that business communication teachers examine and learn from workplace assessment methods. Throughout the article, the author discusses the rationale behind this proposal, reviews relevant literature, reports interview findings on workplace assessment, and compares classroom and workplace practices to suggest areas where we can meaningfully bridge the two.”

J. A. Dawson

Professional Issues

Answering the call: Toward a history of proposals


“While scholars have begun to write a history of reports and instructions, little scholarship exists on the history of proposals. To fill this gap, I analyze proposals written by Dorothy Wordsworth and Anne Macvicar Grant, ca. 1800. My analysis uses contemporary rhetorical theory to determine how they structured their writing and incorporated rhetorical appeals to achieve their goals. My findings show that their texts should be placed on a continuum of the history and development of the proposal genre. Further findings suggest that their use of contemporary rhetorical theories authorized Wordsworth’s and Grant’s discourse to successfully affect change.”

Valerie J. Vance

Chrysler’s “Most Beautiful Engineer”: Lucille J. Pieti in the pillory of fame


“The case of Lucille Pieti, a technical writer at Chrysler, serves as a discipline-specific illustration of some of Rossiter’s (1995) generalizations about women scientists and engineers after World War II. Like other women with engineering degrees, Pieti emerged from college with high hopes, only to find herself consigned to one of the traditional ghettos for women scientists and engineers: technical communication. Her case is unusual, however, because she became a national celebrity.”

Valerie J. Vance

Early Cold War professional communication: A rationale for progressive posthumanism


“Early Cold War professional communication teachers anticipated posthumanist awareness in our culture. They were also granted more agency for progressive action than many of their contemporaries. By showing the different ways that these scholars responded to their posthuman situation, this study articulates how posthumanist theory complicates the progressive notion
of a student-centered classroom and, more importantly, explains what happens to the progressive project when it is more explicitly connected to posthumanism.”

Valerie J. Vance

**Posthuman rhetorics and technical communication**


“This special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* brings posthuman perspectives to bear on the kinds of metarhetorical, organizational, and intertextual problems that are central to technical communication. *Posthumanism* is a general category for theories and methodologies that situate acts and texts in the complex interplays among human intentions, organizational discourses, biological trajectories, and technological possibilities. These approaches counter theories that see human action and production from either the perspective of individual intention or the dominance of larger human discourses and mechanical structures. As organizations become more complex, technologies more pervasive, and rhetorical intent more diverse, it is no longer tenable to divide the world into human choice and technological or environmental determinism. Professional and technical communication is a field that is perfectly situated to address these concerns. … [After presenting a history of posthumanism, the authors discuss] theoretical grounds for professional and technical writing. These two strains of posthumanism, one focused on culture and the other on complex systems, are both represented in the scholarship of professional and technical writing.”

Valerie J. Vance

**(Re)Appraising the performance of technical communicators from a posthumanist perspective**


“Composition and rhetoric’s attention to writing as cultural performance is expanded to analyze writing as organizational performance. A Foucauldian understanding of discourse enables the diagnosis of a technical writer’s annual performance appraisal as grounded in 20th-century Taylorized management principles. Tenets from posthumanism—including a discarding of the liberal humanist subject in knowledge production and a leveraging of distributed cognition for enhanced performance of humans acting in concert with intelligent machines—enable a theoretical framework for repurposing this genre.”

Valerie J. Vance

**System mapping: A genre field analysis of the National Science Foundation’s grant proposal and funding process**


“In this article we compare two different perspectives on the National Science Foundation (NSF) grant proposal and funding process: that depicted by the
genre-dominant NSF Web site and that articulated by several successful NSF-funded researchers. Using genre theory and play theory to map the respective processes, we found that a systems-based refocusing of audience analysis—namely, genre field analysis—allows researchers a more accurate understanding of their roles as agents within the system.

Valerie J. Vance

Public Relations

A collaborative approach for media training between technical communication and public relations [Tutorial]


“Talking to the media often becomes part of the job description for subject matter experts (SMEs) who can discuss an organization’s research or new products. Media training can prepare SMEs for media interviews by helping them identify major points to discuss and showing them how to present that information to the reporter. Prior research in professional communication supports the need for media training for scientific or engineering SMEs based on the public’s increased interest in these areas. As part of this media training tutorial, I introduce eight guidelines based on my own experience as a public relations counselor and on research conducted in an organizational setting with SMEs in health information technology …. This paper has supplementary downloadable materials at http://ieeexplore.ieee.org. The file contains Appendix A.”

Gowri Saraf

Scientific Writing

Accessibility and order: Crossing borders in child abuse forensic reports


“Physicians write child abuse forensic reports for nonphysicians. We examined 73 forensic reports from a Canadian children’s hospital for recurrent strategies geared toward making medical information accessible to nonmedical users; we also interviewed four report writers and five readers. These reports featured unique forensic inserts in addition to headings, lists, and parentheses, which are typical of physician letters for patients. We discuss implications of these strategies
that must bridge the communities of medical, social, and legal practice.”

Valerie J. Vance

Technology

Censored!

The author covers how “countries use Internet censorship to dominate the political dialogues … [as well as censorship used] to create favorable conditions for government-controlled businesses … [He describes] methods—including Domain Name system blocking, Internet Protocol blocking, or Uniform Resources Locator key word filters … [along with forcing] Google and other search engines to self-censor their results …. [He expands about those methods in an insert and concludes] what sometimes appears to be censorship is actually rooted in economics.”

Sherry Southard

Computer graphics for all

“This article introduced our efforts to make computer-graphics authoring accessible to the general public, making it as much a daily communication tool as word processing and presentation applications. What most defines our research is its focus on end users. This opens up new application possibilities for existing technologies while posing unique technological challenges for interface researchers and developers.”

Sherry Southard

An interview with Edsger W. Dijkstra

This interview with programming pioneer Edsger Dijkstra (1930–2002) was conducted by CBI researcher Phil Frana at Dijkstra’s home in Austin, TX, in August 2001 for a NSF-KDI project on ‘Building a Future for Software History.’ Winner of ACM’s A.M. Turing Award in 1972, Dijkstra is well known for his contributions to computer science as well as his colorful assessments of the field …. this interview has been condensed from the complete transcript, available at http://www.cbi.umn.edu/oh.”

Sherry Southard

Seven principles for selecting software packages

This article provides “practitioners with a grounded set of principles to guide the selection of software packages …. The seven principles were derived empirically from a field study and from our understanding of software acquisition. The field study approach provided us with in-depth knowledge of a number of standards decisions made by actual organizations …. The principles extend beyond the two obvious but narrow factors of price and immediate features, to include a wider networked and multilateral view of software packages. We promote a view of buying software as a continuous process of constantly trying to match available packages with a base of already installed information systems, while anticipating future organizational needs and advantages in technology.”

Sherry Southard

thinkflickrthink: A case study on strategic tagging

“The growth both in quantity and diversity of online communities across the World Wide Web, along with a number of new technologies that enhance both social interaction and content management, have bred an array of increasingly participatory practices. Users … can become extremely sensitive and protective of what they believe to be their rights …. [S]trategic taggers went beyond mere description, annotation or even expression, and tried to subvert the system by exploiting its own features. They tried to expand the
limits of the linguistic context of tagging, in order to be able to speak loudly and directly to those who run the Web site …. The fact that most of the collective protest tagging was done by a minority of protestors reflects a phenomenon that should be acknowledged when dealing with communities: the actions of a few can outweigh those of the many …. The study of the dynamics of uncoordinated semantic strategies within dense on-line communities is of enormous importance to gain a greater understanding of how social and linguistic interaction takes place in a technological environment, and how it can augment the users’ potential for direct action.”

Sherry Southard

**Why do people tag? Motivations for photo tagging**


“Tagging, or using keywords to add metadata to shared content, is gaining much popularity in recent years. Tags are used to annotate various types of content, including images, videos, bookmarks, and blogs, through web-based systems such as Flickr, YouTube, del.icio.us, and Technorati, respectively. The popularity of tagging is attributed, at least in part, to the benefits users gain from effective sharing and from organization of very large amounts of information …. Given the growing popularity of tags as means of sharing and organizing large amounts of information, and since user participation is critical to the sustainability of content sharing communities, developers and managers of collaborative content sharing systems such as Flickr, del.icio.us, and YouTube may benefit from understanding what motivates users to tag …. The findings of the survey suggest that, as expected, both social presence and individual level motivations affect users’ tagging level, with the exception of the Family & Friends motivation.”

Sherry Southard

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**Usability Studies**

**The blank-page technique: Reinvigorating paper prototyping in usability testing**


“Arguably, usability testing is most effective when integrated into the user-centered design process. One way to encourage this integration is to reemphasize the value of paper prototyping. In a recent test of a university library website, we married low-fidelity paper prototyping with medium-fidelity wireframe prototyping. When user navigation led to nonexistent pages or dead ends, users were encouraged to create what they thought should be where there was nothing. This blank-page technique gave us insights into users’ mental models regarding site content and design, providing developers with useful data concerning how users conceptualized information they encountered.”

Gowri Saraf