The following articles on technical communication have appeared recently in other journals. The abstracts are prepared by volunteer journal monitors. When the abstracts published with articles are used, they are enclosed in quotation marks. 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.

**Communication**

**Connections with a purpose**

The authors stress the importance of communication management in successfully maintaining online communities: “The online community can thrive only if the communication among its members is effective.... Relationships are a prerequisite for an online community to exist.... The optimal role of the communicator is one of a manager building relationships, with communication strategies that achieve a purpose or deal with issues.”

*Sherry Southard*

**Convergence in the rhetorical pattern of directness and indirectness in Chinese and U.S. business letters**

“This article examines rhetorical patterns in claim letters from two universities, one in China and one in the United States, to see whether these patterns are convergent. A genre-based textual analysis of the claim letters, written by two different cultural groups of participants, found that both groups of letters display a similar rhetorical preference for directness and indirectness. The author explores how local contextual factors have contributed to these groups of participants’ preference for similar rhetorical patterns and calls for the integration of contextual factors in intercultural rhetoric research, practice, and pedagogy.”

*Kimberly C. Harper*

**How effective is Google’s translation service in search?**

“The article presents the results of a study which investigated the effectiveness of Google’s translation service for searching the internet using multiple languages. It was found that asking Google to automatically translate search terms reduces search effectiveness. These performance reductions were generally due to the characteristic problems associated with mechanical translation, and varied between language pairs. Using one intermediary language, into which all search terms were translated, and from which all subsequent translations were made, was found to improve the results.”

*Sherry Southard*

**Human interaction for high-quality machine translation**

“The article discusses the difficulties of automating translation services, and the need for human interaction in order to provide acceptable results. As of 2009, even the best automated translator could not produce publication-quality translation. Computer-
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assisted translation systems, such as translation memory systems, are discussed, and the development and testing of the TransType2 (TT2) system is described. TT2 allows for machine translation to be corrected by a user, and generates improved suggestions based on those corrections.”

Sherry Southard

Making sense of media synchronicity in humanitarian crises

“This paper reintroduces concepts from sensemaking in media synchronicity theory (MST). It focuses on how media should support synchronicity to fit communication needs when making sense of a humanitarian crisis situation. Findings from interviews with senior management of humanitarian aid organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo show that, contrary to what is suggested by MST, low synchronicity media are not sufficient to support conveyance processes. Instead, information and communication systems should support these actors in connecting, building, and maintaining their networks of contacts. Also, information and communications systems need to be designed to support the observed sensemaking communication activities of noticing, updating, inquiring, triangulating, verifying, reflecting, enacting, and interpreting.”

Gowri Saraf

Design

The ethic of exigence: Information design, postmodern ethics, and the Holocaust

“Compared to ethics in technical writing, ethics in design has received less attention. This lack of attention grows more apparent as document design becomes ‘information design.’ Since Katz discerned an ‘ethic of expediency’ in Nazi technical writing, scholars have often framed technical communication ethics in categorical terms. Yet analyses of information design must consider why arrangements of text and graphics have symbolic potency for given cultures. An ‘ethic of exigence’ can be seen in an example of Nazi information design, a 1935 racial-education poster that illustrates how designers and users co-constructed a communally validated meaning. This example supports the postmodern view that ethics must account for naturalized authority as well as individual actions.”

Kimberly C. Harper

Education

Adapting to change: Becoming a learning organization as a relief and development agency

“Disaster areas and developing economies put great demands on relief and development personnel to adapt efficiently to fast-changing conditions. We draw on experiences at Mercy Corps and the literature on learning organizations, adaptive expertise, and communities of practice to identify five systemic tensions that need to be balanced when designing effective learning solutions: (1) employees’ desire to learn versus the pressures of the job, (2) investing in strategic learning initiatives versus the need to keep organizational operating costs low, (3) formal learning versus informal learning, (4) maintaining flexibility within a local context versus organization-wide standards that create efficiency and accountability, and (5) people versus technology. We offer examples of possible solutions to the individual and organizational learning challenge in relief and development organizations.”

Gowri Saraf
**The banality of rhetoric? Assessing Steven Katz’s “The Ethic of Expediency” against current scholarship on the Holocaust**


“Since 1992, Steven Katz’s ‘The Ethic of Expediency’ on the rhetoric of technical communication during the Holocaust has become a reference point for discussions of ethics. But how does his thesis compare to current understandings of the Holocaust? As this article describes, Katz was in step with the trend two decades ago to universalize the lessons of genocide but his thesis presents key problems for Holocaust scholars today. Against his assertion that pure technological expediency was the ethos of Nazi Germany, current scholarship emphasizes the role of ideology. Does that invalidate his thesis? Katz’s analysis of rhetoric and his universalizing application to the Holocaust are two claims that may be considered separately. Yet even if one does not agree that ‘expediency’ is inherent in Western rhetoric, Katz has raised awareness that *phronesis* is socially constructed so that rhetoric can be unethically employed. Thus, rather than remain an uncritically accepted heuristic for technical communicators, ‘The Ethic of Expediency’ can be a starting point for ongoing exploration into the ethical and rhetorical dimensions of the genre.”

Valerie J. Vance

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**Complementing business case studies with humanitarian case studies: A means of preparing global engineers**


“Business case studies have been a standard pedagogical tool in technical communication classrooms. However, the expansion of engineering practice—including the design and implementation of appropriate technology in the developing world—suggests the need to complement such studies. This paper analyzes three business and three humanitarian case studies. It highlights the complexities of audience and context that distinguish the humanitarian case studies, and it argues that incorporating humanitarian cases into technical communication courses would promote higher levels of learning, student engagement, and the global citizenship that will be requisite for all engineers in the twenty-first century.”

Gowri Saraf

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**Contending with terms: “Multimodal” and “multimedia” in the academic and public spheres**


“Scholars have begun naming and defining terms that describe the multifaceted kinds of composing practices occurring in their classrooms and scholarship. This paper analyzes the terms ‘multimedia’ and ‘multimodal,’ examining how each term has been defined and presenting examples of documents, surveys, web sites and others to show when and how each term is used in both academic and non-academic/industry contexts. This paper shows that rather than the use of these terms being driven by any difference in their definitions, their use is more contingent upon the context and the audience to whom a particular discussion is being directed. While ‘multimedia’ is used more frequently in public/industry contexts, ‘multimodal’ is preferred in the field of composition and rhetoric. This preference for terms can be best explained by understanding the differences in how texts are valued and evaluated in these contexts. ‘Multimodal’ is a term valued by instructors because of its emphasis on design and process, whereas ‘multimedia’ is valued in the public sphere because of its emphasis on the production of a deliverable text. Ultimately, instructors need to continue using both terms in their teaching and scholarship because although ‘multimodal’ is a term that is more theoretically accurate to describe the cognitive and socially situated choices students are making in their compositions, ‘multimedia’ works as a gateway term for instructors and scholars to interface with those outside of academia in familiar and important ways.”

Daniel Drahnak
Digital underlife in the networked writing classroom

“This article offers a theoretical framework for ‘digital underlife’: the distal and potentially transgressive discursive activities proliferated by emerging technologies. Digital underlife is an adaptation of sociologist Erving Goffman’s concept of underlife, which figured centrally in Robert Brooke’s well-known study of writing activity in 1988. As emerging digital technologies fray the communicative bounds of traditional sites for teaching and learning, such as the classroom and the conference hall, we are confronted anew with a complex array of possibilities for giving and getting attention. Drawing on the work of Charles Moran and Richard Lanham, this article calls for a more receptive disposition toward the productive dimensions of digital underlife. The article promotes a stance that imagines productive digital underlife to be intrinsic to curricula that combine digital writing activity and rhetorical education, rather than short-selling digital underlife as mere distraction, as an impediment to learning, or worse, attempting to banish it altogether.”

Daniel Drahnak

Dream bloggers invent the university

“This essay focuses on the blogs authored by students in interdisciplinary, writing-intensive seminars on the art and science of dreaming at Queens College and Princeton University. The writing for these courses requires students to ‘invent the university’ in the sense that they must find ways to bridge the public and private, or the theoretical and the personal. I argue that blogs have the potential to help students develop strong and distinctive voices in the pursuit of intellectual inquiry—and that because of this, they can help teachers and scholars overcome the intellectual divides between the ‘expressivist’ and ‘constructivist’ pedagogies represented by Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae respectively. In the concluding section, I examine blog entries in which students recount instances in which they dreamed about our course readings (and other materials). These accounts are striking because they offer evidence that students were internalizing and synthesizing course material. To explain this internalization and synthesis, I turn to recent developments in cognitive theory that offer new ways of thinking about learning that I believe will help bridge the expressivist-constructivist divide and develop methods for teaching voice as a rhetorical element of writing, one that is essential to intellectual inquiry.”

Daniel Drahnak

An empirical analysis of using text-to-speech software to revise first-year college students’ essays

“Traditionally, composition experts have suggested reading drafts aloud as a means of revising essays; however, the method of reading drafts aloud is severely limited by a single factor: student writers do not always read what is on the page (Hartwell, 1985). Text-to-speech (TTS) software allows students to have their essays read to them so that the limiting factor of reading their own drafts aloud becomes minimized. TTS programs read what is written on the computer screen, and the result is that the students can ‘hear’ the problems of their essays as opposed to simply ‘seeing’ them. Nevertheless, composition researchers have not conducted any empirical studies to determine whether or not TTS is beneficial for ‘local’ and ‘global’ revision, nor have any studies been conducted to determine if TTS is beneficial for students above the fifth grade. This article documents an experimental study conducted at a southwestern university in the United States with fifty-one students to determine whether or not TTS software is useful in the revision process. The results show that users of TTS were as likely as users in the control group to make proofreading changes but less inclined to make local or global changes in the revision process, indicating that TTS possibly works well for proofreading but not necessarily as well for higher-order revision. Further research is recommended to determine TTS’s effectiveness during a longitudinal study as well as for auditory learners and ESL students.”

Daniel Drahnak
Engaging and supporting problem solving in engineering ethics

“Learning to solve ethical problems is essential to the education of all engineers. Engineering ethics problems are complex and ill structured with multiple perspectives and interpretations to address in their solution. In two experiments, we examined alternative strategies for engaging ethical problem solving. In Experiment 1, students studied two versions of an online learning environment consisting of everyday ethics problems. Students using question hypertext links to navigate applied more perspectives and canons and wrote stronger overall solutions to ethics problems than those using embedded hypertext links. In Experiment 2, students engaged in a more generative task, evaluating alternative arguments for solutions to the cases or generating and supporting their own solutions. Both groups better supported their solutions and generated more counterclaims than control students. These studies focused on solving realistic case-based ethics problems as an effective method for addressing ABET’s ethics criteria.”

Christine Bates

Listening as a missing dimension in engineering education: Implications for sustainable community development efforts

“Yes, although listening is valued in engineering education literature, it is conspicuously absent from engineering curricula. Using interview data, data from published literature, reflective instructional experiences, and the intersection of those three data sources, this study investigates two primary issues: (1) engineering students’ sources of resistance to listening instruction in a sustainable community development initiative, and (2) benefits from such instruction. Findings feature a proposed theory of contextual listening and suggest that sources of resistance include the paucity of listening instruction in the engineering curriculum and curricular components that may devalue listening. Benefits of a listening intervention are described, and implications are discussed.”

Christine Cranford

Exploring negative group dynamics

“Most previous social network studies have focused on the positive aspects of social relationships. In contrast, this research examined how the negative aspects of social networks in work groups can influence individual performance within the group. Accordingly, two studies were conducted to make this assessment. The first study examined the effect of negative relations and frequency of communication on performance among student groups. The second study investigated how the Five Factor Model of personality and position in adversarial networks interacted to influence individuals’ performance. Although results of the first study indicated that frequent communication with others could make a person more likeable, consequently helping him or her perform better, the second study showed that those individuals disliked by others were less likely to achieve a good performance rating, despite their conscientiousness, emotional stability, or openness to experiences.”

Christine Cranford

Measuring leadership in self-managed teams using the Competing Values Framework

“This study demonstrates how the application of the Competing Values Framework (CVF) to self-managed teams (SMTs) assists engineering educators to understand how to measure leadership within this context and facilitate an increased awareness of the students in a team, which will consequently increase effectiveness. Specifically, we analyzed data from the Managerial Behavior Instrument, completed by 81 engineering students who participated in self-managed teams for one semester. The instrument measured the use of the four leadership profiles of the Competing...
Values Framework which then allowed the researcher to determine the presence of high or low behavioral complexity. Behavioral complexity determines the team’s ability to utilize multiple leadership roles and subsequent effectiveness. The findings indicate that behavioral complexity does have a significant effect on performance but does not have a significant effect on the attitudes of team members. Overall, teams with high behavioral complexity earned a higher grade on their final team project than teams with low behavioral complexity. This study is significant for engineering education because it provides a theory and framework for understanding leadership in teams. By exploring the relationship between leadership in SMTs and effectiveness, educators and industry can better understand the type of leadership roles necessary for achieving a highly effective team. As a result, instructors can design their teamwork curricula and teamwork training based on the leadership strengths and skills of students which will then prepare students for industry upon graduation.”

Christine Bates

The relationships between students’ conceptions of learning engineering and their preferences for classroom and laboratory learning environments

“This study developed a survey entitled Conceptions of Learning Engineering (CLE), to elicit undergraduate engineering students’ conceptions of learning engineering. The reliability and validity of the CLE survey were confirmed through a factor analysis of 321 responses of undergraduate students majoring in electrical engineering. A series of ANOVA analyses revealed that students who preferred a classroom setting tended to conceptualize learning engineering as ‘testing’ and ‘calculating and practicing,’ whereas students who preferred a laboratory setting expressed conceptions of learning engineering as ‘increasing one’s knowledge,’ ‘applying,’ ‘understanding,’ and ‘seeing in a new way.’ A further analysis of student essays suggested that learning environments which are student-centered, peer-interactive, and teacher-facilitated help engineering students develop more fruitful conceptions of learning engineering.”

Christine Bates

Role negotiations in a temporary organization: Making sense during role development in an educational theater production

“Negotiating the performance of an individual’s role is an essential part of the assimilation process. Role negotiations consist of a two-part process: (a) negotiating a particular organizational role to perform and (b) negotiating that role’s performance once it is assumed. Whereas previous research has failed to explore how these two processes interact, this participant-observation study used sensemaking to examine the communication individuals used both to negotiate a specific role in a temporary organization, an educational theater production, and then to negotiate that role’s performance. The temporary organization provided a unique opportunity to observe both processes from beginning to end and allowed for examination of specific communication behaviors individuals used to make sense during both negotiations. The results provide insight into the relationship between negotiating a specific role and negotiating that role’s performance as well as extending the understanding of sensemaking.”

Christine Cranford

Information Management

Adapting to change through an initiatives program

A “department of 40 employees, which includes information developers, tools experts, editors, and managers, developed an initiative program that ensures continuous improvements to processes, products,
and skill sets for the department and individual contributors while increasing customer satisfaction …. This article presents examples of how the initiative program enabled our department to adapt to challenges, including new requirements for scheduling, deliverables, and translation.”

Sherry Southard

Adding customer partnering to your information-development portfolio

Hackos explains customer partnering, “a technique used to design information products by creating a long-term relationship between representative customers and information developers …. Customer partnering offers technical communicators a way to unravel the complexity of information and organize large bodies of information into online documentation that is useful for its intended audience. By involving customers deeply in the documentation design process, communicators can meet customers’ information needs as effectively as possible.”

Sherry Southard

Automated translation for technical documentation—Can it deliver on the promise

“Until recently, most government and automated translation implementations have been in government and defense areas, but interest has gradually been rising among corporations that see the value it can add to their organizations. This article looks at the different uses of automated translation, how it is adding value to technical publications, and how … teams can prepare content for automated translation.”

Sherry Southard

DITA, metadata maturity, and the case for taxonomy

Some best practices discovered include “Start by identifying all your taxonomy use cases, …. [R]euse existing vocabulary, …. Authors are the best people to apply descriptive metadata, [and] …. Leverage the technology.”

Sherry Southard

The DITA Olympiad: Approaching and managing a DITA migration collaboratively

Showers describes a technical publications development process created “for migrating our monolithic system documentation to DITA [Darwin Information Typing Architecture]-structured XML.” The steps consist of project scope, technical design, project management, and editing.

Sherry Southard

Improving CMS archiving process and efficiency—Lean Sigma at Hewlett-Packard

“Improving the efficiency of the CMS [content management system] archiving and new edition process for customer source content created several benefits: reductions [cycle time, number of steps, collections], … increase in customer satisfaction levels, [and] … less administrative overhead.”

Sherry Southard
Indexing effectively in DITA


The author describes “three methods of placing index terms, which helps readers retrieve information using a familiar paradigm, … how to leverage the reuse capabilities of DITA [Darwin Information Typing Architecture] to ensure the consistency of index terms throughout an information set and reduce … localization costs by providing a single source for all … index entries. … For a summary of the best practices for indexing DITA topics for translation, see http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/download.php/27581/IndexingBestPracticesWhitePaper.pdf.” [Accessed 22 March 2010]

Sherry Southard

The role of the writer: Before and after the shift to structure


“This article discusses ways in which the role of the writer changes when implementing a structured writing and content management strategy and how managers can ease the fear of change …. The … discussion describes the role of a writer before and after … along with the affect it may have on a writer.”

Sherry Southard

Why CCM is not a CMS: Or why you shouldn’t confuse a whale with a fish


“People are beginning to realize it is a category mistake to call some kinds of systems a ‘CMS’ (Content Management System), when what they are really referring to is a ‘CCM’ (Component Content Management) system …. [The author indicates the differences by discussing] the content management evolution …. [and] confusion between the CMS and CCM categories.”

Sherry Southard

Comparing competitive and cooperative strategies for learning project management


“Many organizations use project management to organize and administer resources in time and in place in an effort to optimize costs and meet certain constraints. These constitute cognitive skills acquired through training and experience that have successfully been shown to be trainable through simulation. However, past research on simulation-based project management training focused on individual learning. In this paper, we are interested in investigating whether a competitive or cooperative strategy is more desirable in using simulators for project management training. Several theories suggest that cooperative learning is more beneficial to learning than competitive learning. To investigate this problem, an experiment was set up based on the simulation-based Project Management Trainer (PMT) software. The results suggest that using both PMT cooperative and competitive strategies yield learning in project management. However, cooperative strategies yield better results in the overall outcome.”

Christine Bates

Embracing left and right


“The author explores how a tobacco firm in crisis engaged in crisis communication and image repair work in a highly polarized ideological milieu. Through an analysis of the tobacco firm’s public statements produced in the aftermath of a 1997 lawsuit, the author demonstrates how the firm dealt with its milieu by exploiting and embracing both of the ambient ideological poles. By embracing these poles, the firm turned critique and opposition into discursive resources for its crisis communication. The author argues that political-ideological framing of organizational communication and discursive
appropriation of critique and opposition serve as critical foci for organizational communication scholarship.”

Christine Cranford

**Organizational newcomers: Applying organizational newcomer assimilation concepts to customer information seeking and service outcomes**


“The process through which customers resolve uncertainty regarding their participative role in service transactions may be similar to the process that organizational newcomers experience as they gain role clarity and assimilate into organizations. This study applies organizational socialization literature to examine customer socialization, information seeking, role clarity, and service outcomes. Results (N = 328) indicate that (a) customers’ perceived social costs have a stronger association with information seeking than does felt need for information, (b) overt and indirect information seeking is related to role clarity, and (c) role clarity mediates relationships between overt and third-party information seeking tactics and service outcomes. The report concludes with discussion of the benefits of applying organizational socialization frameworks to service contexts.”

Christine Cranford

**Anti-employer blogging: An overview of legal and ethical issues**


“Anti-employer blogs, those which criticize companies or their employees, are posing significant legal and ethical challenges for corporations. The important legal issue is the conflict between the employee’s legal duty of loyalty to the employer and the employee’s right to free speech. Although U.S. and state law describes what an employee may or may not say in a blog, corporations should encourage employees to contribute to the process of creating clear, reasonable policies that will help prevent expensive court cases. The important ethical issue concerning anti-employer blogs is whether an employee incurs an ethical duty. The legal duty of loyalty, explained in a company-written policy statement that employees must endorse as a condition of employment, offers the best means of protecting the legal and ethical rights of both employers and employees.”

Valerie J. Vance

**Applied ethics in the engineering, health, business, and law professions: A comparison**


“Applied ethics plays a critical role in engineering, health, business, and law. Applied ethics is currently a required component of the pre-practice education for these professions, yet the literature suggests that challenges remain in how we define, instruct, and assess professions-based ethics education .... Based on the ongoing debate associated with the instruction and assessment of applied engineering ethics, an exploratory investigation was performed to determine what could be learned by looking across professions .... Ethics, as an educational topic, can be very broad in scope. This study was limited to literature at the intersection of ethics terminology, historical development, instruction, and assessment within engineering, health, business, and law. Many references associated with each profession and the input of profession-specific content experts informed the literature survey .... Ethics within the engineering, health, business, and law professions have historically developed in isolation. Even case studies, which the engineering profession seems to have adopted from law, are framed differently within engineering. There are common lines of debate related to instructional methods, curricular methods, and instructor qualifications, but no profession has resolved these debates. A common trend in applied ethics research is a focus on assessment of student learning, rather than evaluation of instructional methods and/or curriculum
incorporation methods. Assessment tools have been developed and applied widely for many years in several of the health care sub-disciplines, business and law. An engineering-specific applied-ethics assessment tool has recently been developed, but has yet to see extensive application.”

Christine Bates

Offshoring and the new world order

“The author discusses the negative and positive aspects of offshoring by U.S. firms to meet their information technology needs …. [and] how information technology has been commoditized to become a set of skills that can be contracted to a low bidder. However, … the U.S. corporate community is imprudent in focusing on short-term profit and ignoring the resulting loss of skills …. The information technology field must accept that offshoring is not a passing trend and focus on opportunities for computer science students and a return to an emphasis on education in the U.S.”

Sherry Southard

Power and trust in global virtual teams

“The article discusses the question of how power is exercised in global virtual teams and how it can be used to effectively contribute to the development of trust. The insufficient attention given to power dynamics in the development of understanding with regard to virtual teams in the early 21st century is noted, mentioning that more should be done to explore the nature of power within virtual teams that are geographically distributed. The need for greater understanding with regard to computer-mediated interactions and the dynamics of virtual teams is also noted.”

Sherry Southard

Research

The social influences on electronic multitasking in organizational meetings

“Meetings serve an important function in organizational communication. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have infiltrated meetings and allowed a new range of communicative behaviors to emerge. This cross-organizational study relies on key elements in the social influence model to predict variables that influence engagement in electronic meeting multitasking behaviors. The observation of organizational norms and the perceptions of others’ thoughts concerning the use of ICTs for multitasking during a meeting explain a considerable amount of variance in how individuals use ICTs to multitask electronically in meetings. Implications for workplace ICT use in meetings and contributions to the social influence model are also discussed.”

Christine Cranford

Composition studies, professional writing and empirical research: A skeptical view

“This article builds upon the work of Richard Haswell’s ‘NCTE/CCCC’s Recent War on Scholarship’ by providing an alternative framework for empirical inquiry based on principles of skepticism. It examines the literature relating to empirical research and argues that one of the issues at hand is the perceived link of empirical research to positivism, which clashes with the dominant social constructivist paradigm. It draws upon classical rhetoric and the work of radial empiricist William James to formulate an alternative framework for empirical research based on skeptical principles.”

Valerie J. Vance
**A “smart” cyberinfrastructure for research**

“The article discusses the role of semantic computing in revolutionizing the way that humans interact with the large amounts of information available on the Web while conducting research. The development of semantic technologies that will allow machines to process, combine, and infer information from the vast amounts of Web-based data in ways that previously were only possible for humans is discussed, noting that such an advancement in artificial intelligence would improve the effectiveness of Web-based research.”

Sherry Southard

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**Scientific Writing**

**The resources of ambiguity: Context, narrative, and metaphor in Richard Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene***

“Richard Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene* illustrates the power of ambiguity in scientific discourse. The rhetorical and epistemic resources that ambiguity provides are most apparent at the level of metaphor but are also central to the exigency for Dawkins’s argument and to the narrative form that the argument takes. Using ratios derived from Burke’s dramatic pentad, I analyze how ambiguous language helped Dawkins to link different theoretical conceptions of the gene and consequently posit connections between genes and organisms that had not yet been empirically established. I thus demonstrate at a conceptual and textual level how ambiguity contributes to the construction of novel scientific arguments. For Dawkins, ambiguity provided a discursive space in which he could speculate on connections and developments for which he did not yet have evidence, data, or terminology. Despite his insistence that his use of figurative motive language was simply a ‘convenient shorthand’ for more technical language, *The Selfish Gene* demonstrates the powerful epistemological and rhetorical role that ambiguous metaphors play in biological discourse.”

Kimberly Harper

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**The role of information and communication in the context of humanitarian service**

“Information and communication are playing an increasingly important and more sophisticated role in humanitarian-service activities involving logistics, organizational learning, health-care delivery systems, assessment, and education. This role is impacted by important trends and environments within which the humanitarian sector operates. These include a shift of focus from providing direct aid to capacity building, empowerment, and assessment; a shift in project focus from technical solutions to broader sociotechnical strategies; and increased emphasis on demonstrating effectiveness, improving efficiency, and collaborating with other organizations .... [The authors provide] some background on the role of information and communication in the context of humanitarian-service activities .... [and] important current trends in the humanitarian sector.”

Gowri Saraf

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**Value-sensitive design and health care in Africa**

“In this paper, we describe our approach of using value-sensitive design to guide the design, development, and implementation of health information systems for use in rural areas of two developing countries in Africa. By using shared conceptual investigation, we are able to create a generalized list of stakeholders and values that span multiple projects without losing any of the power of the conceptual investigation. This process can be applied to other projects to develop a stronger set of
stakeholders and values. We also present a technical investigation of a vaccine delivery project in Sub-Saharan Africa and plans for an upcoming empirical investigation for a mobile-phone-based support tool for community health workers in East Africa.”

Gowri Saraf

**Technology**

**Assertions of expertise in online product reviews**

“In online consumer reviews on Web sites such as Epinions, laypeople write and post their evaluations of technical products. But how do they get readers to take their opinions seriously? One way that online reviewers establish credibility is to assert expertise. This article describes 10 types of assertions that online reviewers used (along with the three broader categories of these types), explaining the method used to test the types for reliability. This testing revealed that the types are reliable. This study lays the groundwork for understanding how reviewers construct expertise and, therefore, credibility, and for gauging readers’ perceptions of reviews that contain these assertions.”

Kimberly Harper

**Electronic paper’s next chapter**

“The article focuses on electronic paper technology for use in consumer electronic devices, such as electronic books. The author mentions that the biggest technological challenge is the electronic paper color displays. He suggests that new technology is necessary to render better-quality color inexpensively as well as to show moving images and other displays. The author discusses research into electronic paper technology including that by Prime View International, the company that manufactures the Amazon Kindle; Plastic Logic; and Philips Research.”

Sherry Southard

**Design for effective support of user intentions in information-rich interactions**

“With the rise of Web pages providing interactive support for problem-solving or providing large amounts of information on which a person is expected to act, designers and writers need to consider how a person interacts with increasingly complex information-rich environments and how they intend to use the information. This article examines some of the theory underlying why people make errors early in the problem-solving process when they form an intention. Since these errors are cognitively based and occur before any physical action, it is harder to analyze their cause or incorporate changes to reduce them in a design. It examines factors which contribute to user errors and which designers and writers must consider to produce documents which reduce user errors in forming intentions.”

Valerie J. Vance

**The impact of the digital divide on e-government use**

“As governments worldwide increasingly implement e-government services, concerns about the potential impacts of the digital divide continue to grow. … It can be argued that two major divides exist: an access divide and a skills divide. Typically, those more likely to use e-government services include younger citizens, citizens with higher levels of income, citizens with higher levels of education, and citizens who use the Internet for other tasks. This confirms that the digital divide has a major impact on e-government usage. It is imperative that government agencies not only acknowledge this divide, but also take steps to diminish it.”

Sherry Southard
Music, transtextuality, and the World Wide Web

“This article sketches the significance of aurality in hypermedia, notes that the field of English studies is constructing the World Wide Web as a verbal and visual medium, and proposes a transtexual framework to aid technical communicators in designing musical hypermedia. Because the study of music on the World Wide Web is nascent, this article includes references to art and film music, whose theories and practices are substantially developed.”

Valerie J. Vance

Presenting consumer technology with POP: A rhetorical and ethnographic exploration of point-of-purchase advertising

“Point-of-purchasing advertising (POP) is responsible for half of the purchase decisions made in the store. Because of 1) the influence of POP on the sale of technical consumer products and the economy; 2) our need to understand trends that shape technical and business communication; 3) the intermedial nature of POP (where spoken and written words work with place, visual image, physical structures, and multimedia integrated marketing campaigns); and 4) its theatrical and local nature, we need both a situated and theoretical exploration of POP. Drawing upon three months’ participant observation in advertising, I describe a POP composing process in an integrated marketing campaign. Cognitive responses to layout and the interrelation of rhetorical canons are considered for preparing communication for a marketplace that is three-dimensional variegated, noisy, and peripatetic.”

Valerie J. Vance

Privacy and security: Usable security: How to get it

“The author argues that there is no user model for computer security and that security experts, economists and cognitive scientists should combine their efforts to achieve one. The author maintains that computer security involves risk management in that the user must balance the costliness of security in terms of economics and time against the possible loss of information. He maintains that these costs must be quantified so that users can rationalize their expense and vendors can address user needs. He also mentions the need for system accountability as well as a free flow of information.”

Sherry Southard

Privacy requires security not abstinence: Protecting an inalienable right in the age of Facebook

Garfinkel argues for greater Internet security of personal identity data, beginning with a brief history of the concept of privacy that assesses how various constitutional amendments relate to privacy, and describes the past 40 years of federal regulations on privacy. Despite current regulations, much of the responsibility for preserving personal data security currently rests with the individual citizen. Too often, citizens are forced to choose between convenience and privacy. Computer and telecommunications technology advances have created gaps in data security that can be fixed by technology and additional federal regulation. Specifically, the solution is a strong identity system that is free to use and backed by the government. Americans need to let go of their long-standing resistance to national identity card-type proposals because unsecured systems currently access personal identity information on a daily basis.

Gary Hart
Recent & Relevant

Quantifying the benefits of investing in information security

“The authors discuss their research into the efficacy of investing in information security in which they measured the revenues of information security companies that control a primary share of certain information security market segments. The three key market segments were content security, identity and access management (IDAM), and network security. The authors found that increased investment in information security conferred a higher degree of protection and reduced the severity of attacks that could adversely affect corporate stock prices.”

Sherry Southard

Search me: Inside the launch of Stephen Wolfram’s new “Computational Knowledge Engine”

“This article explores and assesses a ‘computational knowledge engine,’ called Wolfram Alpha that is being pioneered by Stephen Wolfram. Basically, this engine computes answers from internet-available data rather than simply list web pages in response to specific questions. This approach involves something called ‘data curating,’ for which data is essentially reformatted and/or depicted by Wolfram Alpha so that it can be accessed using expanding number of datasets, elaborate calculator, and natural language interface. Data curating is necessary because the semantic web has not occurred as he and others envisioned that it would several years ago. If it had, we would be able to search for and obtain the data we need in the form and context desired. Talbot describes examples of how much more powerful the Wolfram Alpha search engine is than other current search engines such as Google and Wikipedia.” [Ed.: Wolfram Alpha works for only factual data; for more information, visit http://www.wolframalpha.com/screencast/introducingwolframalpha.html.

Gary Hart

Security in dynamic Web Content Management Systems applications

“The article discusses the management of information security with regard to dynamic Web Content Management Systems (WCMS). The paper presents strategies for integrating the goals of information security with eight dimensions of WCMS, including the proper configuration of WCMS on the server, the usage of non-persistent cookies or short-duration persistent cookies transmitted through a secure encrypted connection, and the proper secure design of Web-based forms. A security framework is developed, based upon the integration of security with the eight dimensions of WCMS, and the security of the Web architecture at the level of the WCMS software applications is addressed using the framework.”

Sherry Southard

The state of corporate Web site accessibility

“In this study, we extend a previous CACM paper that surveyed accessibility at a snapshot in time with historical and additional perspectives on accessibility of Fortune 100 (F100) Web sites …. The F100 Web sites were chosen for the usual reasons this population is studied, but also because we expect the largest and most profitable companies to be the most likely to have the resources and personnel to ensure web site accessibility. The unit of analysis was the top-level home page for each Web site. This is an optimistic approach as companies may put their best foot forward here and then fail to consider accessibility for lower level pages…. Beyond, the graying of America and most of Europe, the number of people with visual and indeed all disabilities is growing and these consumers have significant buying power.”

Sherry Southard
Understanding public policy development as a technological process

“This article discusses public policy writing as a genre of technical communication and, specifically, public policy development as a technological process. It cites DeGregori’s theory of technology to demonstrate the shared invention processes of technology and public policy, the work of public policy scholars to describe the policy-development process, and the work of human-computer interaction scholars to identify cognitive models of public policy development as a technological process. The article concludes with a discussion of e-rulemaking Web sites and the role of technical communicators in creating these blended spaces.”

Kimberly C. Harper

Why Web sites are lost (and how they’re sometimes found)

“The authors discuss their creation of a web-repository crawler, Warrick, that restores lost web sites from Internet Archive, Google, Live Search (now known as Bing) and Yahoo, collectively known as the Web Infrastructure (WI). They present the results of their online survey surrounding lost web sites and their after-loss recovery. Respondents had either personally lost one of their web sites or had recovered someone else’s web site. They found that esoteric sites were being restored. They suggest that technology to preserve digital materials will become more inclusive and seamless.”

Sherry Southard