Collaboration

Building a collaborative writing strategy

“Doing business in a global marketplace demands virtual collaboration. Sharing topics in a content management system requires writers to collaborate virtually. What does collaboration mean in technical writing organizations?” This article focuses particularly on the collaborative model developed by Morten Hansen in *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid the Traps, Create Unity, and Reap Big Results*. The authors examine how Hansen’s methodology can support the process of building and implementing a collaborative writing strategy, one that supports successful single sourcing solutions.” They also discuss “the benefits of collaboration, why barriers occur, and how to overcome those barriers.” The article includes “useful tools and strategies to help teams reach their collaborative potential.”

Lyn Gattis

Describing place through user generated content

“The authors detail their methods in creating the first large-scale, user-generated geographic reference Web site. In an effort to visually document Great Britain, images and descriptive text are uploaded by volunteer contributors. Since typical content standards do not work in determining the value of descriptive terms, the creators developed a new framework for analyzing content, including facets of elements, qualities, and activities. They discuss the validity of unmoderated content and they analyze the quality of descriptive writing based on contributor behavior.”

Anita Ford

Reputation systems for open collaboration

“Content creation used to be an activity pursued individually or in closed circles of collaborators .... The Internet changed all that, so millions of people around the world are now able to collaborate. The first open-collaboration systems—wikis—focused on text content; the range of content that can be created collaboratively has since expanded to include video editing … documents … architectural sketching … and geographical maps …. Open collaboration promises immense benefit, as shown by the history of Wikipedia, but is also a challenge to content creators and content consumers …. How can systems be built to encourage constructive interaction and minimize the consequences of vandalism and spam? How can construction of high-quality information be facilitated?”

Sherry Southard
**Role of familiarity in affecting knowledge gaps in geographically dispersed work**

“Increasingly, various tasks are being conducted by dispersed teams. However, such teams lack a common context, and knowledge gaps exist among dispersed team members making collaboration difficult. This paper seeks to examine whether and how properties of team context (e.g., familiarity with team members and task) have the potential to moderate the effects of structure of team context (e.g., dispersion) on dispersed team collaboration. Further, this paper teases out these effects in teams with a varying extent of dispersion. Findings offer evidence that a unique constraint of distance that dispersed teams face may not be the key factor that determines their performance.”

**Team leaders and team members in interorganizational networks: An examination of structural holes and performance**

“Through the examination of 11 intact university research project teams, this study examines the relationship between team leaders, team members, their communication networks (represented as structural holes), and performance. The study shows that in the conduct of their work, the team leaders bridged more structural holes than team members. Although team leaders demonstrated a higher level of out-of-alliance performance, they did not demonstrate higher levels of individual performance on their teams (compared with team members). Furthermore, we examined the relationship between structural holes and both individual team member performance and overall team performance. Contrary to our expectations, bridging structural holes were not significantly related to individual team member performance but were negatively and significantly related to overall team performance, the effect of which came mainly from team members’ effective size.”

**Bridging corporate and organizational communication: Review, development and a look to the future**

“The theory and practice of corporate communication is usually driven by other disciplinary concerns than the field of organizational communication. However, its particular mind-set focusing on wholeness and consistency in corporate messages increasingly influence the domain of contemporary organizational communication as well. We provide a formative and critical review of research on corporate communication as a platform for highlighting crucial intersections with select research traditions in organizational communication to argue for a greater integration between these two areas of research. Following this review, we relax the assumptions underlying traditional corporate communication research and show how these dimensions interact in organizational and communication analysis, thus, demonstrating the potential for a greater cross-fertilization between the two areas of research. This cross-fertilization, as we will illustrate, enriches the theorization of corporate and organizational communication and may better link micro- and macro-level analyses.”

**How institutions communicate: Institutional messages, institutional logics, and organizational communication**

“Institutional messages provide a conceptual and empirical link between the predominantly macro world of institutions and the micro world of organizational communication. The concept of the institutional message is used colloquially but has not been developed theoretically. The conception that emerges from a review of the scholarly and primitive uses is that institutional messages are collations of thoughts that take on lives independent of senders and recipients. They may have
the force of rules, spread intentionally or unintentionally via multiple channels to narrow or wider audiences. This essay considers the institutionality of messages in terms of their endurance, reach, encumbrancy, and intentionality. It is argued that individuals and organizations develop institutional logics as they make sense of institutional messages. Implications and suggestions for research are included. Response articles by R. Suddaby (‘How communication institutionalizes: A response to Lammers’ 7 pgs), C. Hardy (‘How institutions communicate; or how does communicating institutionalize?’ 8 pgs), and S. R. Barley (‘Signifying institutions’ 6 pgs) continue Lammers’ discussion.”

Sherry Southard

New landscapes in professional communication: The practice and theory of our field outside the US [Special issue]

“This special issue examines theories and practices of professional communication outside the US. In this editorial, we preview each article of this issue and place those articles in the context of current practices and theories in the field. We also outline crucial questions and directions for future research. These directions include the call for a more comprehensive view of international professional communication, which takes into account philosophies, approaches, and practices which are current in Finland and China.”

Gowri Saraf

Social influence in networks of practice: An analysis of organizational communication content

“Networks of Practice (NoPs) facilitate knowledge sharing among geographically dispersed organization members. This research tests whether social influence in NoPs is reinforced by actors’ embeddedness in practice (knowledge about informal content), organizational embeddedness (knowledge about formal organizational content), structural embeddedness (knowledge about who knows what), and relational embeddedness (knowledge about informal relationships). A full-fledged automated content analysis on all postings on four NoPs maintained by a multinational chemical company revealed four dimensions in communication content that largely coincide with the proposed embeddedness types. We measured social influence by assessing to what extent actors’ use of uncommon language traits was adopted in the responses to the postings. Hypothesis testing revealed that network members who communicate about informal practice, and know who knows what, exert more social influence than others. The results suggest that network members’ social influence is rooted in their utilitarian value for others, and not in the organizational or relational embeddedness.”

Sherry Southard

Talking up failure: How discourse can signal failure to change

“This article explores the predictive properties of talk as an indicator of failure to change. As part of the exploration of organizational change, researchers regularly focus on how discourse is used and applied to achieve certain processes and outcomes. This position presents change as a function of particular types of communication and its interpretation. Using longitudinal data of an organization’s technology change, we propose that the way employees talk about planned organizational change, as a group, signals and can be used to recognize eventual failure to change. Extending current trends in discursive analyses, we establish talk as a reflective device, in the context of tracking failure while it occurs, by combining social identity theory (SIT) with a language and social psychology (LASP) approach. In doing so, the discourse of failure can be viewed as part of an intergroup phenomenon experienced and interpreted through organizational memberships.”

Sherry Southard
**Computer issues**

**Adding twisties to help generated by DITA-OT**


“A ‘twisty’ is a not-so-common term for links inside HTML that expand to display more text” so that readers can avoid shifting back and forth between web pages. “When a twisty’s title is clicked, the content is revealed, and the rest of the page moves down. Click the twisty’s title a second time and the content is hidden once again.” This article provides instructions for creating a twisty, a demonstration of twisties in a specific context, and suggestions for using twisties in help content. The author will provide a copy of the sample twisty code discussed in the article upon e-mail request.

Lyn Gattis

**Content management in the workplace: Community, context, and a new way to organize writing**


“The authors report on a multiyear study designed to reveal how introducing a content management system (CMS) in an administrative office at a large organization affects the office’s writing and work practices. Their study found that users implemented the CMS in new and creative ways that the designers did not anticipate and that the choices users made in using the CMS were often driven not by technology but by the social implications the CMS held for their office. By contrasting how writers negotiated specific genres of writing before and after the CMS was introduced, the authors argue for increased attention to providing flexible technologies that enable writers to innovate new tools in response to the social needs of their writing environments. This approach must be driven by research on the implications of technology in workplace communities.”

Lyn Gattis

**Design**

**Illustrating medicine: Line, luminance and the lessons from J.C.B. Grant’s Atlas of Anatomy (1943)**


“The onset of the Second World War created a temporary crisis in the North American medical community when the supply of medical textbooks from Europe, used to train physicians and surgeons, was threatened. In 1941, Dr. J. C. B. Grant of the University of Toronto proposed a new anatomical atlas, comprising both tonal and line drawings, to address this need. In this visual essay, the authors briefly illustrate Grant’s method for creating these drawings, and his systematic and deliberate use of photography in the process. They explain the reasons for Grant’s use of black and white images, and examine the specific illustration techniques used by these artists. A series of close-ups of the original drawings produced for the atlas in the 1940s highlight the visual communication strategies deployed by these skilled illustrators. In so doing, they make an argument for the importance of examining how images are produced for medical publication, and not merely examining what is produced.”

Sherry Southard

**Editing**

**Epinions advisors as technical editors: Using politeness across levels of edit**


“This study examines how, in the realm of social media, Epinions Advisors voluntarily perform a role similar to that of a technical editor. Specifically, the study examines Advisors’ use of politeness strategies at various levels of edit in order to motivate product reviewers to improve their work. The study categorizes Advisors’ comments about 60 product reviews according to levels of edit
in order to determine how Advisors address editing as they attempt to fulfill the concerns of technical editors: advocating for readers and mentoring writers. Updated reviews and Advisor–reviewer discussions suggest that Advisors motivated reviewers to edit. “

Lyn Gattis

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**Education**

**Challenges to project-based computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for professional communication in China**


“This paper reports on a 10-year case study at a Chinese university of a faculty team’s attempt to develop and disseminate a project-based computer-assisted language learning (CALL) program for professional communication. The discussion focuses on three main challenges (professional/academic values, pedagogical philosophy, and institutional culture) to expand a project-based CALL program at this university. Based on the findings, this paper discusses how the implementation of project-based CALL for professional communication needs to be founded upon a good understanding of China’s socio-cultural contexts and how it might be tailored in order to be more responsive to the local university context. This paper concludes by suggesting a path that practitioners might take in light of these circumstances and challenges.”

Gowri Saraf

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**Eportfolios in business communication courses as tools for employment**


“Eportfolios are a powerful tool for business students to gain self-awareness and take control of their learning experiences. Ideally, they can be used as online profiles in the job application process, allowing more authenticity, personalization, and completeness than traditional résumés. In our colleges, eportfolios help students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and form goals for professional development. Overall, however, our students’ eportfolios lack the professional touch of their résumés. We believe extensive coordination within a college is required to help business students create eportfolios that they can use to market themselves for professional positions.”

Katherine Wertz

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**Collaborative learning in engineering students: Gender and achievement**


“This research sheds light on collaborative activities in engineering writing courses. ‘Collaboration is an ABET accreditation required component of the engineering curriculum. Research has shown that collaborative learning positively influences student achievement. The relationship between motivation, collaborative learning strategies, and achievement is not well studied in an engineering education context …. A set of hypotheses was tested that predicted positive relationships between students’ self-reported informal collaboration, self-efficacy for learning course material, knowledge building behaviors, and course grade. A second set of hypotheses was tested that predicted gender similarities in reported self-efficacy, and gender differences in reported collaborative learning activities …. One hundred fifty engineering students were surveyed for study 1 and 513 students were surveyed for study 2 …. Overall, students’ self-reported collaborative learning strategies were associated with increased self-efficacy for learning course material and course grade, particularly for students who received ‘B’s’ in the course. Female students reported greater use of collaborative learning strategies than their male peers.’”

Gowri Saraf
Eportfolios and cognitive storytelling: Making the journey personal

Students in the senior Communication Studies eportfolio course at one private university follow a systematic model for reflecting on the work they have completed. “Authentic reflections are critical components of strong portfolios, and students often struggle with this important task. Students in [this] program have found success through carefully constructed steps of collecting, selecting, and reflecting on artifacts from their coursework, internships, and extracurricular activities. Working in peer groups as well as meeting individually with the instructor are key parts of the entire process.”

Katherine Wertz

Eportfolios: Proving competency and building a network

“Use of eportfolios for business communication students in an advanced two-quarter capstone brought an unexpected networking opportunity, in addition to their conventional use as a showcase for student writing and research. This article discusses how students developed their eportfolios. Then, through use of a course website providing an optional link to those eportfolios, students were able to use portfolios to jumpstart conversations among other students and business communication alumni. The instructor has required both print and digital portfolios since 2006 and explains why both types of portfolios are useful, especially to enhance professional networking.”

Katherine Wertz

Eportfolios: A tool for constructing a narrative professional identity

“At Emory University’s Goizueta Business School, eportfolio serves as the foundation for a sequence of assignments in our core ‘Communication and Professional Development’ course. Our philosophy underlying the use of eportfolio is influenced by narrative and sense-making theory. At the beginning of the semester, students record their experiences and accomplishments on eportfolio. We then guide students to identify the narrative themes running through their experiences, and to use those themes to develop personal brand statements, stories that demonstrate their strengths and values in action, and professional development plans. This sequence of assignments allows students to imagine, construct, and articulate a professional identity through narrative.”

Katherine Wertz

Problem-based learning: Influence on students’ learning in an electrical engineering course

“Faculty teaching writing to engineering students should consider this research as they design their courses. ‘Recently, there has been a shift from using lecture-based teaching methods in undergraduate engineering courses to using more learner-centered teaching approaches, such as problem-based learning. However, research on the impact of these approaches has mainly involved student perceptions of the teaching method and anecdotal and opinion pieces by faculty on their use of the teaching method, rather than empirically collected data on students’ learning outcomes …. This paper describes an investigation of the impact of problem-based learning (PBL) on undergraduate electrical engineering students’ conceptual understanding and their perceptions of learning using PBL as compared to lecture …. Fifty-five students enrolled in an electrical engineering course at a Midwestern university participated in this research. The study utilized a within-subjects A-B-A-B research design with traditional lecture as the baseline phase and problem-based learning as the experimental phase of the study …. Results suggested participants’ learning gains from PBL were twice their gains from traditional lecture. Even though students learned more from PBL, students thought they learned more from traditional lecture …. We discuss findings from this study and provide specific implications for faculty and researchers interested in problem-based learning in engineering.’

Sherry Southard
Transfer, transformation, and rhetorical knowledge: Insights from transfer theory  

“This article traces the uncomfortable relationship between writing studies and the concept of learning transfer. First it reviews three stages in the changing attitudes toward learning transfer in writing theory that is influenced by rhetorical genre studies, activity theory, and situated learning. Then it reviews learning transfer theory itself, an area that is seldom explicitly referred to in writing studies. The article concludes with a synthesis that brings transfer theory to bear on writing studies, suggesting directions for developing research and pedagogical practices related to business and technical communication.”

Lyn Gattis

Ethical issues

The rhetoric of industrial espionage: The case of Starwood vs. Hilton  

“When Starwood Hotels charged Hilton Hotels with industrial espionage, the case hinged on an employment agreement that two executives had violated. The rhetoric of the employment agreement contrasted greatly with that of the corporation’s own code of business conduct. Whereas the private agreement stressed narrow self-interest, the public code emphasized a much broader network of ethical business relationships. This article analyzes the differences between these two types of business discourse in order to help business practitioners align espoused and enacted values.”

Katherine Wertz

Trust issues in Web service mash-ups

“With the emergence of Web service mash-ups (Web applications that integrate different data sources), online data integration and aggregation is increasingly becoming the online norm for both commercial and non-commercial users. With such widespread adoption of data integration from discrete sources, the question emerges as to whether the resultant mash-up can be considered as trustworthy. This paper explores the concepts behind Web service mash-ups to determine the factors influencing their trustworthiness. The focus is on examining data quality and data assurance issues for both the data providers and the mash-up consumers.”

Anita Ford

Language

Professional communication in a global business context: The notion of global communicative competence  

“On the basis of an extensive survey study conducted among business professionals engaging in global communication, this paper discusses communicative competence. Rapid changes in work environments, particularly advancing globalization and new technology, have highlighted the need for expanding our knowledge of the elements that constitute communicative competence in global encounters. Competence has been investigated by several researchers; however, the language perspective, particularly the language used for international communication, that is, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), has largely been ignored. Our findings indicate that global communicative competence (GCC) consists of three layers: multicultural competence, competence in English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) and the communicator’s business know-how. Based on our findings, we present a model for GCC, which includes language as a key component. Implications for theory, practice, and education include...”
the need for a multidisciplinary approach and the acknowledgement of ELF/BELF as the language of global interaction. ELF/BELF assumes a shared ‘core’ of the English language, but focuses on interactional skills, rapport building, and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications.”

Gowri Saraf

Management

The dialectics of the exit interview: A fresh look at conversations about organizational disengagement

“Examination of relevant areas of research on communication identified a number of starting points to create theory-based propositions about conducting a conversation in which departing employees are more willing to reveal the actual reasons for organizational disengagement and interviewers are better able to discern the authenticity of their remarks. These propositions are based on substantial empirical research, the generalizability of which in many cases has been affirmed by meta-analyses of theoretical relationships across a variety of experimental contexts and subject populations …. Importantly, communication research suggests significant departures from current EI practices. For example, consideration of the dialectics underlying self-revelation and authenticity assessment suggest the use of interviewers who are familiar with the departing employee. By contrast, the EI generally is conducted by a human resource professional … an individual with whom the departing employee may not have a particularly well-established or close relationship, especially in large organizations …. This review of the literature on communication suggests that problems that typify EIs may be explained, in part, by the interviewer’s lack of familiarity with the departing employee and that a different approach to selecting an interviewer may be advisable.”

Sherry Southard

Medical Writing

Pharmaceutical medical writing competency model: Practical applications

“This article describes the practical applications of a medical writing competency model developed by a medical writing task force associated with the Drug Information Association. The model describes work functions, activities, knowledge, skills, and behaviors deemed necessary to perform successfully as a medical writer in the pharmaceutical industry. The focus of this article is on how the model can be a professional tool to help medical writers and medical writing organizations with organizational structure development; recruiting and hiring; onboarding, training, and development; setting expectations and aligning to assignments; performance evaluation and staff retention; and defining the profession.”

Magdalena Berry

Research report: Medical communication practice and trends in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies

“Pharmaceutical companies employ many medical writers, but little is known about their work environments or how work quality and productivity are measured …. To explore these issues, AMWA and CMR International (a Thomson Reuters company that conducts pharmaceutical/biotechnology industry research) surveyed medical communication managers at pharmaceutical companies …. Of 13 responding companies (15 individual respondents), 61% were headquartered in the United States, 31% in Europe, and 8% in Japan. All were among the 50 largest in the industry; 62% were among the 20 largest. Medical communication was usually organized into separate departments (80%); regulatory writing and scientific publication functions were always separate from each other. Outsourcing of writing projects had increased during the past 3 years for 47% of respondents; 60% expected it to increase over the next 3 years. More than
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half (57%) of respondents said the quality of work produced by internal staff members was better than that of outside vendors, and 62% of managers rated the productivity of outside vendors and internal staff as not different. Respondents who hire new managers, writers, or editors said that certificates or certifications from medical communication differentiate candidates who are considered equally qualified . . . .

Magdalena Berry

Public Relations

Building social capital through rhetoric and public relations

“When the focus is on meaning making, language, rhetorical argument, and persuasion, there is enormous potential to see how public relations theory and practice in external organizational rhetoric can serve community interests—or not. Rhetoric (as the discourse) and public relations (as the enactment of that discourse) are essential to building and sustaining a society as a good place to live because they create various types of social capital. This article describes the various relationships among international and indigenous NGOs, business organizations, and community activists in facilitating (and, at times, frustrating) dialogue in Jordan. It offers an example of how social capital may be created when rhetors using public relations advocate in ways that enhance the capacity of local governance and make their community a better place to live.”

Sherrill Southard

Is the voter only a tweet away? Micro blogging during the 2009 European Parliament election campaign in the Netherlands

“This study explores the use of Twitter by candidates, in particular their networking and micro-blogging activities in the election campaign for the European Parliament elections of 2009 in the Netherlands. The main focus is on identifying what political aspects (e.g., party characteristics and candidate characteristics) influence their use of Twitter as a campaign tool. Furthermore, we explore the effectiveness of candidates’ activities on Twitter in gaining votes.”

Anita Ford

Ladders, samurai, and blue collars: Personal branding in Web 2.0

“It is the case for internal organization rhetoric, external rhetoric is essential to understanding, evaluating, and improving organizations’ participation in the sociopolitical discourse in the communities where they operate . . . . [T]his issue examines organizations’ participation in and response to the discourse external to them and definitive of the dynamics of resource dependency . . . . [This special issue explores] how organizations engage constructively and destructively in the discourse that defines their legitimacy . . . . The literature reviewed here is the tip of the iceberg. Exploring rhetorical (and critical) implications of external organizational communication has, is, and will work to understand how discourse is and should lead organizational rhetors to define and work toward, as well as confound and hamper, efforts to make society a good place to live.”

Sherrill Southard

External organizational rhetoric: Bridging management and sociopolitical discourse

“As is the case for internal organization rhetoric, external rhetoric is essential to understanding, evaluating, and improving organizations’ participation in the sociopolitical discourse in the communities where they operate . . . . [T]his issue examines organizations’ participation in and response to the discourse external to them and definitive of the dynamics of resource dependency . . . . [This special issue explores] how organizations engage constructively and destructively in the discourse that defines their legitimacy . . . . The literature reviewed here is the tip of the iceberg. Exploring rhetorical (and critical) implications of external organizational communication has, is, and will work to understand how discourse is and should lead organizational rhetors to define and work toward, as well as confound and hamper, efforts to make society a good place to live.”

Anita Ford
seen as a rational choice, given the circumstances of globalized capitalism and precarious employment.”

Anita Ford

On barnyard scrambles: Toward a rhetoric of public relations

“How can we gain a better understanding of public relations rhetoric? This essay takes stock of the analytical building blocks that can be found in the public relations research and addresses the question raised in the introduction to this special issue: Can external organizational rhetoric help make society a good place to live? It is argued that whereas the literature on crisis communication and the concept of apologia—speech of self-defense—is fairly extensive, analysis of other subfields and types of public relations discourse is needed. Following the modification of its original epistemological basis, the concept of the rhetorical situation helps guide this endeavor. Such analysis can form a basis for a critical discussion of whether organizational rhetoric helps improve society.”

Sherry Southard

Organizational rhetoric: A subject of interest(s)

“The authors problematize ‘…organizational rhetoric. To do so requires taking a critical stance that identifies the hidden ideographs and assumptions embedded within them. External organizational rhetoric scholars, aiming to foster a more fully functioning society, need to expose, smooth, and neutralize these assumptions and tacit constraints if there is to be continued progress in the study and application of the ways external organizational rhetoric, including public relations, might further contribute to society at large.’”

Sherry Southard

Questions of self-interest, agency, and the rhetor

“This article accepts the virtue of the rhetorical ideal and offers insights that can lead discourse from bias, distortion, and partisanship to come closer to that ideal in the service of society. Without self-interest and disagreement, rhetoric would not be needed, but can it achieve collaborative outcomes without the distortion of serving various interests set against one another in dysfunctional ways? As means for finding shared meaning, or pressing agreement that advances one interest against another, rhetoric can empower external communicators. The quality of discourse reflects on the character of those who speak for each organization among multiple voices and interests.”

Sherry Southard

Rhetoric, climate change, and corporate identity management

“This article examines rhetorical aspects of corporate identity management practiced by corporations in many parts of the world as a consequence of the ongoing institutionalization of climate change. Through a case study, we analyze the rhetoric produced by car producers in Denmark (the three best selling brands in 2009: Peugeot, Ford, and Toyota) to identify themselves vis-à-vis external key stakeholders. The article is based on theories stemming from neoinstitutional organizational studies, especially the Scandinavian research tradition, where organizations are active ‘translators’ that adopt new rules, norms, and ideas in accordance with their local organizational contexts. We ask what kind of impact the new external organizational rhetoric may have on the organizations concerned and on society at large: Do organizations, in the course of time, become what they claim to be?”

Sherry Southard
**Self-regulatory discourse: Corrective or quiescent?**

“External organizational discourse can have effects on society through the policies it helps to create or the policies it helps to defeat. One type of external discourse that shapes policies is corporate efforts to create self-regulation and to prevent governmental regulation. This article explores the use of self-regulatory discourse designed to end public interest in an issue, thereby creating quiescence. The key question resulting from this discussion is whether self-regulatory claims benefit business and society, or merely business …. Issues management is the area of public relations devoted to policy making and serves as a foundation for developing self-regulatory discourse. However, issues management is primarily descriptive in nature with a focus on processes and the utility of communication in expanding the number of people concerned about an issue …. The examination of self-regulatory discourse illustrates how a thoughtful analysis of external organizational discourse helps all of us to better understand the role of public relations in society and its effects on society.”

**Losing by expanding: Corralling the runaway object**

“Third-generation activity theory (3GAT) has become a popular theoretical and methodological framework for writing studies, particularly in technical communication. 3GAT involves identifying an object, a material or problem that is cyclically transformed by collective activity. The object is the linchpin of analysis in the empirical case. Yet the notion of object has expanded methodologically and theoretically over time, making it difficult to reliably bound an empirical case. In response, this article outlines the expansion of the object, diagnoses this expansion, and proposes an alternate approach that constrains the object for case-study research in writing studies.”

**Research methods for studying evolutionary and ecological processes in organizational communication**

“This article provides an overview of research tools for studying organizational ecology and evolution, including (a) the variation-selection-retention sequence, (b) the likelihood of events occurring over a period of time (event history analysis), (c) transition sequence of populations from one state to another (sequence analysis), (d) relationships among nodes in networks over time (network analysis), (e) simulation of complex relationships and interactions (computational modeling), (f) changes in populations’ fitness for survival (NKC models), and (g) competitive interdependence among populations over time (predator–prey models). We conclude with a brief review of graphical and qualitative methods.”

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**Research**

**Advancing research in organizational communication through quantitative methodology**

“This article showcases current best practices in quantitative organizational communication research. We emphasize their value in exploring issues of the day and their relation to other research approaches. Materials are presented around four themes: systematic development and validation of measures, including the use of mixed methods; multiple levels of analysis; the study of change and development over time; and relationships among people, units, organizations, and meanings.”

**Sherry Southard**
**The visibility of Wikipedia in scholarly publications**


“Publications in the Institute of Scientific Information’s (ISI, currently Thomson Reuters) Web of Science (WoS) and Elsevier’s Scopus databases were utilized to collect data about Wikipedia research and citations to Wikipedia. The growth of publications on Wikipedia research, the most active researchers, their associated institutions, academic fields and their geographic distribution are treated in this paper. The impact and influence of Wikipedia were identified, utilizing cited work found in (WoS) and Scopus. Additionally, leading authors, affiliated institutions, countries, academic fields, and publications that frequently cite Wikipedia are identified.”

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**Usability studies**

**Creating a customer information program: Nurturing customer relationships and leveraging feedback**


“Collecting customer information is critical to the content development process, but the data gathered can also drive organizational and enterprise-level knowledge management changes.” This article reviews NetApp’s evolving Customer Information Program, an initiative to increase understanding of audience needs and improve documentation content. Key components include identifying strengths and weaknesses of existing feedback areas; acknowledging customer feedback promptly and closing the loop with all feedback providers; building content developers’ customer skills; and creating “incentives, metrics, and goals to encourage a customer-responsive culture.” According to the article, an effective customer listening program not only improves documentation but also provides management with solid data on the value of “great customer-facing technical content.”

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**Technology**

**Non-traditional book publishing**


“Non-traditional book publishing, prospering on the Internet, now accounts for over eight times the output of traditional publishing. [It] includes books published by their authors and books representing the reuse of content, most … not covered by copyright. The result is a heterogeneous, hyper-abundant contemporary book environment where the traditional mixes with the non-traditional …. [F]inding books that match a reader’s taste is more difficult than previously [thought] …. [This may] involve new methods of discovery.”

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**Visitors and Residents: A new typology for online engagement**


“Understanding your audience is a key factor in technical writing. This article proposes a continuum of “Visitors” and “Residents” as a replacement for Prensky’s much-criticized Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants. Challenging the basic premise upon which Prensky constructed his typology, Visitors and Residents fulfills a similar purpose in mapping individuals’ engagement with the Web …. [This continuum] accounts for people behaving in different ways when using technology, depending on their motivation and context …. ”