**Collaboration**

**Deriving IT-mediated task coordinator portfolios for global virtual teams**


“Global virtual teams (GVTs) can provide benefits in terms of lower costs and enhanced performance. However, the realization of these benefits depends on effective GVT task coordination, which faces significant challenges due to time-zone differences and geographical dispersion. Further, there is a lack of understanding of optimal information-technology (IT)-mediated coordination mechanisms for these teams. Based on an in-depth study of project tasks carried out by three GVTs, we uncovered IT-mediated task coordination portfolios (sets of mechanisms) used for effective coordination. The portfolios should fit the GVT’s task dependence, members’ common time frame, and perceived time constraints in order to be effective.”

*Sherry Southard*

**The communication habits of engineers: A study of how compositional style and time affect the production of oral and written communication of engineers**


“Writing is common skill for many whose job requires them to communicate through business documents. But there are many professionals who seemingly have difficulty with writing. Many engineers are required to write proposals and reports yet have received little formal writing instruction. The purpose of this study was to determine if writing apprehension, their composition process, or the presence of deadlines affects the production of documents. The hypothesis was that engineers have high writing apprehension, generally use a product-based approach, and tight deadlines negatively

*Sherry Southard*
affect the end quality. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with civil engineers to gauge their level of apprehension, learn their personal composition process, and determine how deadlines affect their writing. While the hypothesis was not conclusively supported, the study revealed six key themes into how engineers structure their writing tasks and found that the writing environment of engineers significantly impacts the composition process.”

J. A. Dawson

“Eternal ephemera” or the durability of “disposable literature”: The power and persistence of print in an electronic world


“Popular and academic discussions of the future of print focus on the electronic formats of books and newspapers but ignore some of the most ubiquitous and historically significant, albeit ephemeral, types of print media. This article argues for taking the flyer, leaflet, and pamphlet seriously. These forms of ‘disposable literature’ are in part facilitated by electronic media and in part able to disseminate messages in ways that electronic media cannot, and thereby provide a bridge between new media and new audiences. There are two major factors that contribute to the durability or persistence, pervasiveness and power of disposable literature in contemporary society: the unique characteristics of print media; and the impact of electronic media in enhancing their production and distribution.”

Sherry Southard

How similar are real estate agents and human-service workers? A study of real estate agents’ responses to distressed clients


“The study of job burnout has focused primarily on workers who hold human-service jobs, such as teachers, nurses, and social workers. Little extant research, however, has explored emotional communication and job burnout among workers from other industries.

The present study used the empathic communication model of burnout to explore how interactions with distressed clients affect real estate agents’ feelings of burnout and thoughts of quitting. A total of 287 real estate agents and brokers completed an online questionnaire about their empathic responses to client distress, communicative responsiveness, burnout, and thoughts of quitting. Results indicate that the empathic communication model of burnout offers adequate explanation for the relationship between empathy, communication, and burnout for real estate agents. Practical and theoretical implications of these results are discussed.”

J. A. Dawson

Language options for managing: Dana Corporation’s philosophy and policy document


“This historical case study identifies language components managers may use to articulate shifts in their strategy. The authors analyzed the language revisions and substitutions Dana Corporation’s upper management made to their highly significant strategic statement, The Philosophy and Policies of Dana (PPD). A large global vehicle parts supplier, Dana experienced tremendous growth and standing until the late 1990s, when a downturn in the industry necessitated dramatic facility closings and workforce reductions. The authors compared the 1987 and 2004 versions of management’s PPD using two frameworks from strategy to guide textual analyses: Campbell’s Ashridge Mission Model and Eccles and Nohria’s Strategic Triadic, coupled with historical company research and conversations with company officials. Dana’s example suggests language options—thematic devices, modifiers, verbs, and sentence subjects—that managers should consider when formulating messages about the strategic changes they envision.”

J. A. Dawson
Moving international technical communication forward: A world Englishes approach

“This article explores how the English language contributes to cross-boundary communication failure and establishes that there is an ‘English language problem’ that has not been adequately addressed in preparing United States native English-speaking students for international technical communication tasks. For example, U.S. technical communication scholars are still grappling with the problems of using English in software internationalization and translating technical communication products across boundaries of national culture and language without privileging Western values and beliefs. The tendency is to assume American culture and American Standard English as the norm, and to identify cultural and linguistic differences as problems only when there is a communication failure or when non-native speakers of English translate product users’ manuals and other documents for use by Americans. The article draws attention to the limitations of the current favored strategies for training native speakers in international audience analysis and calls for a revamping of the curriculum to allow for the integration of language-based methodologies. It suggests the incorporation of the World Englishes perspective into training programs to internationalize students’ learning experiences.”

Daniel Drahnak

Rethinking the role of value communication in business corporations from a sociological perspective – Why organisations need value-based semantics to cope with societal and organisational fuzziness

“Why is it so plausible that business organisations in contemporary society use values in their communication? In order to answer this question, a sociological, system theoretical approach is applied which approaches values not pre-empirically as invisible drivers for action but as observable semantics that form organisational behaviour. In terms of empirical material, it will be shown that business organisations resort to a communication of values whenever uncertainty or complexity is very high. Inevitably, value semantics are applied in organisations first when the speakers are uncertain about which stakeholders to whom they have to address (uncertainty) or when different stakeholder groups have to be addressed simultaneously (complexity); second, when the identity of the organisation has to be described; and third, when future strategic options that cannot be expressed by quantitative terms have to be communicated. Values accordingly play a role in organisational practice when certain aspects are indeterminate. Therefore, they are a means for organisations to communicate under fuzzy circumstances. On the basis of these findings, new approaches to value management can now be formulated.”

Christine Cranford

Tenure, status, and workload: Fundamental issues among business communication faculty

“This article is based on the work of the Non-Tenure-Track Committee of the Association for Business Communication (ABC). Results of research performed by the committee are discussed. Focus is on issues of tenure, status, and workload that affect instructors of business communication and, the authors purport, that affect the livelihood of the academic field of business communication. Placed in the context of the national trend in academe to hire non-tenure-track faculty, the authors review results of surveys of ABC members that indicate how business communication faculty fit within that national landscape. Additionally, the survey results offer a glimpse at information from participants about tenure status, academic departments or homes, salaries, and responsibilities associated with appointments. The article ends with a discussion and the recommendations that members of the business communication community may want to consider as a means of strengthening and improving the status and working conditions many ABC members face.”

J. A. Dawson
**Design**

**Design principles for visual communication**

“Visual communication via diagrams, sketches, charts, photographs, video, and animation is fundamental to the process of exploring concepts and disseminating information. The most-effective visualizations capitalize on the human facility for processing visual information, thereby improving comprehension, memory, and inference. Such visualizations help analysts quickly find patterns lurking within large data sets and help audiences quickly understand complex ideas .... [The authors] have used [a] three-stage approach to build automated visualization design systems in two domains: cartographic visualization and technical illustration.”

Content is illustrated with eight figures.

*Sherry Southard*

**Education**

**Assessing typographic knowledge using timed tests**

“While researchers and instructors of technical and professional communication have embraced the importance of visual communication skills in recent years, little systematic effort has been made to develop assessment instruments that measure visual design skills. This paper presents a project that examines timed tests as a means of measuring a student’s ability to solve design problems. The process and rationale for the test designs and the results of a series of empirical studies are discussed. The results of the studies suggest that timed tests can be a viable complement to the project-oriented assessment approach suggested by prior studies.”

*Sherry Southard*

**A bibliography of works published in the history of professional communication from 1994-2009: Part 1**

“Part 1 [covers] bibliographies and methodological statements; disciplinary self-consciousness; the classical period; the medieval period; Renaissance technical communication, Renaissance scientific writing; Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English commercial discourse, scientific discourse, English and American Women's scientific discourse, American technical communication; Nineteenth Century American technical communication, English and American technical communication by women.”

*Daniel Drahnak*

**Globalizing writing studies: The case of U.S. technical communication textbooks**

“In an increasingly globalized world, writing courses, situated as they are in local institutional and rhetorical contexts, need to prepare writers for global writing situations. Taking introductory technical communication in the United States as a case study, this article describes how and to what extent global perspectives are incorporated into writing. Based on an analysis of eight textbooks and a closer analysis of four of them, we illustrate the representation of technical communication and communicators as well as multiculturalism and multilingualism in these textbooks and point out the limitations vis-à-vis the cultural and linguistic complexity of global technical communication in today’s world. We conclude by considering implications for U.S. college composition as it continues to contribute to the international discourse of writing studies.”

*Sherry Southard*
Meeting students where they are: 
Advancing a theory and practice of archives in the classroom

“This article uses theories of technical communication and archives to advance a pedagogy that includes archival production in the technical communication classroom. By developing and maintaining local classroom archives, students directly engage in valuable processes of appraisal, selection, collaboration, and retention. The anticipated outcomes of this work are the critical practice of making connections, the decentering of the self, the ability to work through noise, and the ability to imagine future users of the archive. The authors conclude that local classroom archives are one new means of meaningful instruction in the technical communication classroom and the local archive concept has great potential for further development.”

Daniel Drahnak

Staffing your documentation team with co-op students: A program that works
Bishop, T., & Kessler, J. (2011). Best Practices, 13, 41-44. [Center for Information-Management Development]

“Qualified [co-op] students in a well-managed program” can help to alleviate staffing and budget pressures in technical publications divisions while they gain in-depth professional experience. This article describes the extensive co-op partnership between Sybase (an SAP company) and the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Critical success factors for the program include recruiting motivated, well-prepared students; supervising each student consistently; training students throughout the co-op term; giving them meaningful assignments; integrating them into company activities; and providing opportunities for interacting with other co-op students. The program strives to provide “a positive and challenging learning experience” so that students take away “a real understanding of what contemporary technical writing entails.”

Lyn Gattis

Using I, Robot in the technical writing classroom: Developing a critical technology awareness

“This article calls for technical writing courses to be more engaged in discussions on critical technological awareness. Being critically aware of technology means looking beyond a socially constructed artifact’s assumed practical benefit and critiquing its effects and development. All discourse surrounding technology should be the purview of the field of technical writing. Because much technical writing pedagogy ignores cultural issues related to technology, this article promotes student engagement in discussions about social constructions of technology to foster critical thinking. This article concludes with a discussion of student responses to an essay assignment based on Isaac Asimov’s novel _I, Robot_. … The novel offers a chance for students to reflect on how contemporary technologies, such as computers, are enmeshed into the social fabric of twenty-first-century life. Additionally, _I, Robot_ generates classroom discussions that bolster student engagement and highlight the impact of contemporary (and future) technologies on workplace practices and the culture at large.”

Sherry Southard

Using the dialogic communication model to teach students to write a report introduction

“This paper presents the use of the dialogic communication model to teach students how to write a report introduction. In the case study presented, the students engaged in discussions and reflections regarding the contextual complexities in the writers’ and readers’ organizational environments, which helped them adapt their writing to their readers’ needs and thought processes. The thinking process that students go through in making their writing more reader centered using this model could be a useful springboard to help students adopt the thinking processes of professional engineers.”

Sherry Southard
Join the [technical] conversation


Although companies must restrict some corporate information to employees or customers, a policy of openness for other information, including product documentation, can provide more rewards than risks. The author addresses concerns that openness enables competitors to “duplicate the functionality” or exploit the weaknesses of a product, or gives hackers entry into the system. However, open documentation can signal market innovation and social responsibility, build trust, and engage customers. A policy of openness also acknowledges current practices of documentation wikis and online information searches. Further, it can help to ensure users find authoritative product information online instead of user blogs or “unofficial documentation.”

Lyn Gattis

Road blocks to CMS adoption


This article summarizes a 2011 survey conducted to learn more about why companies do or do not use content management systems. Of the 100 respondents, 67 percent think a CMS could “reduce development costs and increase work efficiency”; however, “only 29 percent work for an organization that has implemented a CMS.” Those using a CMS report they have “lowered the cost of developing and maintaining content by employing content reuse” and see “benefits of quickly making corrections and updates to already-published content.” Reported obstacles to using a CMS include cost, organizational culture, lack of IT support, and time required for configuring the system.

Lyn Gattis

Road to change


This article uses road-construction analogies to discuss documentation redesign. For example, the author compares linear document systems to a single “road” connecting a group of topics, or “communities.” Although simple to implement, this method of arranging by order, not importance, means that updates likely require system-wide changes. A dense network linking each document to almost every other document provides users with considerable information; but this approach makes maintaining links difficult, and information is sometimes duplicated. Limiting links strategically to roads between “heavy traffic towns” can reduce maintenance time and user frustration. However, the author cautions against “extreme minimalism” that provides insufficient detail for some topics. The author suggests careful planning so as to devote the greatest resources to heavily traveled routes while maintaining some access to the side roads as well.

Lyn Gattis

Intercultural Communication

An analysis of a communication training program for Chinese managers


“This research is based on an analysis of a management communication training program used by one large US international hotel company to train newly promoted supervisors and managers in Hong Kong and mainland China. The key communication competencies emphasized in the training materials were listening effectively, giving and receiving feedback, using verbal language correctly, using effective nonverbal communication, and displaying empathy. Implications of this study indicate that planning and executing any communication training program must be done mindfully, which includes comprehensive follow-up.
through reassessment and coaching by the upper managers in order to support employees’ transfer of training.”

J. A. Dawson

Field convergence between technical writers and technical translators: Consequences for training institutions

“As translation of technical documents continues to grow rapidly and translation becomes more automated, the roles of professional communicators and translators appear to be converging. This paper updates preliminary findings first presented at the 2008 International Professional Communication Conference, Montreal, QC, Canada. It analyzes trends revealed from recent surveys and recommends follow-up research to determine if the trends may continue and become entrenched. The authors conclude with recommendations for academic programs interested in adjusting to the trends.”

J. A. Dawson

GMAT-AWA score as a predictor of success in a managerial communication course

“Because communication skills, especially writing, are such an integral part of managerial work, it may be postulated that these skills are associated with managerial success. Yet evidence of writing competency is not universally considered for admission to MBA programs. The purpose of this study was to investigate the possible correlation between the Analytical Writing Assessment Section (AWA) of the GMAT exam and a ‘critical thinking’ writing assignment that is similar to the AWA. Results indicate that the AWA is significantly correlated with achievement, not only on the writing assignment but also with the final grade in a managerial communication course.”

J. A. Dawson

Intercultural organizational communication: The social organizing of interaction in international encounters

“Intercultural communication has mainly been described in terms of national differences disturbing the sending and receiving of messages. In this article, it is argued that the local organizational context has to be taken into account. By linking Bourdieu’s theories on the social organization of differences to recent theories of organizational communication, the focus of the article is directed at describing the impact of informal and power-related aspects in intercultural communication. The usefulness of a theory on intercultural organizational communication is illustrated by the results of an ethnographic field study on Danish expatriates in a Saudi subsidiary.”

J. A. Dawson

Lacuna or universal? Introducing a new model for understanding cross-cultural audience demand

Rohn proposes “the Lacuna and Universal Model that provides a theoretical classification, systematization and terminology of the various reasons that may lie behind the cross-cultural success or failure of media content. The Lacuna and Universal Model is an analytical framework that helps to understand cross-cultural audience demand by taking into account not only the immediate audience–text relationship, but also the contextual factors that may influence this demand, and the role that media publishers and transmitters may play in the success of cross-cultural media trade.”

Sherry Southard

Linking contextual factors with rhetorical pattern shift: Direct and indirect strategies recommended in English business communication textbooks in China

“Scholars have consistently claimed that rhetorical patterns are culturally bound, and indirectness is a
defining characteristic of Chinese writing. Through examining how the rhetorical mechanism of directness and indirectness is presented in 29 English business communication textbooks published in China, we explore how English business communication textbook writers in China keep up with the contextual changes in the Chinese society and how the rhetorical mechanism of directness and indirectness is locally situated in the English business communication teaching practices in China. We conclude that the pedagogical strategy on directness and indirectness represented in Chinese English business communication textbooks echoes the same strategy favored by scholars in the United States.”

J. A. Dawson

**Tackling the sustainability dilemma: A holistic approach to preparing students for the professional organization**


“Increased knowledge of business sustainability as the basis of a holistic approach to value creation has inspired many managers to integrate ecological and social stewardship into their strategic business innovation plans. However, the coverage of sustainability issues in business courses remains small at many universities. This article illustrates how business communication students can become cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally involved in the analysis and evaluation of the complex sustainability paradigm via an assignment focusing on sustainability. The approach integrates several levels of learning, stretching students’ cognitive skills and enhancing the emotional competencies and behavioral skills needed to enter high-level business jobs.”

J. A. Dawson

**Verbal abuse in the Army of the Cumberland: William Rosecrans’ acid tongue as a major factor in the Union defeat at the Battle of Chickamauga**


“Recent studies suggest that verbal abuse and harassment are relatively common in the workplace. These same studies show that such abuse decreases worker satisfaction, undermines relationships, and distracts workers from functioning as team members committed to common goals. This study examines a classic example of verbal abuse and harassment in the workplace— that of Union Civil War General William Rosecrans toward his subordinates during a campaign conducted in Tennessee during 1863. It can, in fact, be argued that Rosecrans’ abusive language was a major factor in the Union defeat at the Battle of Chickamauga in September of 1863.”

Daniel Drahnak

**Connecting writers with readers**


To increase the quality and volume of interactions between its customers and online documentation writers, ExactTarget attaches a web-based feedback form to each document page. The form identifies the writer of that topic and routes customer emails directly to that person. “The intention is to let each reader know that a real person is on the other end of the documentation who knows the topic, who can help clarify parts that are not clear, and even improve the documentation, if necessary.” This approach to feedback has improved readers’ experiences with product and documentation and has increased the writers’ understanding of their audiences.

Lyn Gattis
Scientific Writing

**Evaluating applications for an informal approach to information design: Readers respond to three articles about nursing**

“Although books in the For Dummies series and other similar series have found commercial success, the approach to information design they use has not received much attention in technical communication journals. This article reports on readers’ responses to information presented in the magazine *Nursing Made Incredibly Easy!* and two other nursing journals. Three groups of readers (two groups of nursing students and one group of nursing faculty members) responded to three articles they read by completing questionnaires and participating in focus groups. *Nursing Made Incredibly Easy!* was regarded as easy to read and as a good starting point for less-experienced readers, but its tone and style elicited some strong objections as well. The article provides observations and recommendations about using an informal approach to information design.”

Sherry Southard

**Insights from illustrators: The rhetorical invention of paleontology representations**

“This study focuses on the intersection of visual rhetoric with rhetoric of science by examining the rhetorical context in which natural science illustrators operate as they represent paleontology. Field methods were employed to study the rhetorical context in which paleontology becomes represented through art; this article reports the findings from the field study and contextualizes the study in rhetorical theories of invention and a discussion of social versus scientific facts. The research highlights some differences between what experts know and what public audiences perceive, offering insight into why those differences exist.”

Amber F. Rach

**Scientific visuals, language, and the commercialization of a scientific idea: The strange case of the prion**

“In the field that investigates infectious brain diseases such as mad cow disease, the verbal and visual packaging of scientific visuals associated with identifying the agent, prion, its processes, and structure served the community ritual of establishing belief in a highly unorthodox phenomenon. Visual promotion fed into cultural expectations of single agents and simple processes, even though the actual agency and disease process have proven highly complex and perhaps unknowable.”

Amber F. Rach

**“A textbook case revisited”: Visual rhetoric and series patterning in the American Museum of Natural History’s horse evolution displays**

“This article describes the development of visual rhetoric in a historically significant museum exhibit. The study documents rhetorical change in the museum’s displays, specifically in visual series depicting the horse’s evolutionary development. The study also exposes the purpose of series patterning in the renovated display and the multiple views on scientific visualization this display implies. Such an analysis suggests the broad range of strategies in visual rhetoric available to science communicators working in the area of science popularization.”

Amber F. Rach

**Warp and weft: Weaving the discussion threads of an online community**

“The Pew Internet & American Life Project reports that 86% of Internet users living with a disability or chronic illness have looked for health information online …. And while so-called e-patients often start this search for information, many find themselves led to communities
that provide this and more, such as Tu Diabetes, an online social network site. This pause in what can seem like an endless search for answers may be one that health professionals can gain insight from. Such extended pauses may give insight into the values of this particular community. This article provides the results and analysis of a study using ethnographic methods and rhetorical analysis to examine the texts posted by members of the social networking site Tu Diabetes in order to discern the values held by this community.”

Sherry Southard

Social Media

Bringing social media to the writing classroom: Classroom Salon

“This article introduces a new IText technology called Classroom Salon. The goal of Classroom Salon is to bring some of the benefits of social media—the expression of personal identity and community—to writing classrooms. It provides Facebook-like features to writing classes, where students can form social networks as annotators within the drafts of their peers. The authors discuss how the technology seeks to capture qualities of historical salons, which also built communities around texts. They also discuss the central features of the Classroom Salon system, how the system changes the dynamics of the writing classroom, current efforts to evaluate it, and future directions.”

Alexis Poe Davis

Building and maintaining contexts in interactive networked writing: An examination of deixis and intertextuality in instant messaging

“In this article, the authors answer the call of the IText manifesto to use ITexts to explore fundamental issues of writing, describing instant messaging (IM) as a form of interactive networked writing (INW) and showing how IM writers discursively construct contexts. Specifically, they argue that writers use (a) deixis to build and maintain material contexts and (b) intertextuality to construct sociocultural contexts. Four intact IM transcripts were coded for instances of four kinds of deixis—space, time, person, and object—and for instances of intertextuality. Results showed that IM writers use all four kinds of deixis and that deictic elements made up almost 10% of the total words of the transcripts. In addition, two kinds of intertextual elements—direct quotation and cultural referents—were used to invoke, build, and sometimes undermine social and cultural contexts. The authors also discuss some of the material affordances and constraints of writing and conclude by arguing that INW is literally dialogic.”

Alexis Poe Davis

Contextualizing experiences: Tracing the relationships between people and technologies in the social web

“This article uses both actor network theory (ANT) and activity theory to trace and analyze the ways in which both Twitter and third-party applications support the development and maintenance of meaningful contexts for Twitter participants. After situating context within the notion of a ‘fire space,’ the authors use ANT to trace the actors that support finding and moving information. Then they analyze the ‘prescriptions’ of each application using the activity-theory distinction between actions and operations. Finally, they combine an activity-theory analysis with heuristics derived from the concept of ‘findability’ in order to explore design implications for SocialWeb applications.”

Alexis Poe Davis

IText reconfigured: The rise of the podcast

“The podcast is a unique configuration of IText precisely because it foregrounds sound in the current cultural moment of secondary orality. This return to
an oral–aural tradition offers several unique benefits. Podcasts adapt well to today’s unstructured work spaces. Moreover, podcasts blur boundaries between virtual and face-to-face communication and virtual and physical spaces. Finally, podcasts are fragmented, reflecting the fluidity of previous ITexts; yet, unlike ITexts, podcasts mostly exist as complete, scripted texts. This article raises questions concerning what the podcast contributes to overall knowledge of how texts are mediated through evolving information technologies.”

Alexis Poe Davis

**The social media release as a corporate communication tool for bloggers**


“This study examines the impact of a new communication tool, the social media release (SMR), on bloggers. Specifically, we seek to determine what factors will influence bloggers’ intent to use SMRs or their components. Our global survey of 332 bloggers finds that bloggers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the SMR and the use of SMRs by companies positively affect their decisions to use SMRs now and in the future. We also find that bloggers’ current use of SMRs influences their decisions to continue using SMRs. Implications on the use of SMRs as corporate communication tools are discussed.”

J. A. Dawson

**Transdisciplinary ITexts and the future of web-scale collaboration**


“Changes in Web infrastructure have allowed ITexts to become a vehicle for transdisciplinary Web-scale collaboration so that large-scale teams can create new knowledge despite differences in team members’ disciplinary training, geographic location, and levels of expertise. In this article, the authors define Web-scale collaboration and illustrate the need for transdisciplinary approaches to problem solving. Then they introduce heuristics for creating and evaluating such transdisciplinary, collaborative Web-scale ITexts, drawing on examples generated at a workshop sponsored by the National Science Foundation that was held at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in April 2010.”

Alexis Poe Davis

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**Technology**

**Business impact of web 2.0 technologies**


“This article describes research designed to measure the impact of the business value of wikis, blogs, podcasts, folksonomies, mashups, social networks, virtual worlds, crowdsourcing, and RSS filters—all Web 2.0 technologies. Properly deployed, they may well permit companies to cost-effectively increase their productivity and, ultimately, their competitive advantage; the research reported here includes results of interview, observation, and survey data-collection from select companies and industries primarily in the U.S. across six performance areas: knowledge management, rapid application development, customer relationships management, collaboration/communication, innovation, and training. The results include caution, skepticism, and a significant contribution to collaboration and communication. Wikis, blogs, and RSS filters have had the greatest impact, while virtual worlds have had virtually none.”

Sherry Southard

**Communications and transport: The mobility of information, people and commodities**


“In a context where the study of communications tends to focus only on the mobility of information, to the neglect of that of people and commodities, this article explores the potential for a closer integration between the fields of communications and transport studies. Against the presumption that the emergence of virtuality means that material geographies are no longer of consequence, the role of mediated ‘technologies of distance’ is considered here in the broader contexts..."
of the construction (and regulation) of a variety of physical forms of mobility and the changing modes of articulation of the virtual and material worlds.

Sherry Southard

**Recent & Relevant**

**Reading revolutions: Online digital text and implications for reading in academe**


“While the Internet is a text-saturated world, reading online screens tends to be significantly different from reading printed text. This review essay examines literature from a variety of disciplines on the technological, social, behavioural, and neuroscientific impacts that the Internet is having on the practice of reading. A particular focus is given to the reading behaviour of emerging university students, especially within Canada and the United States. A brief overview is provided of the recent transformation of academic libraries into providers of online digital text in addition to printed books and other materials, before looking at research on college students’ preferences for print and digital text, and the cognitive neuroscience of reading on screen.”

Sherry Southard

**Usability Studies**

**Driving deliverables by listening to the voice of the customer**


Documentation centered on “customer requirements and customer satisfaction” instead of “functional specifications” improves customer success and document usability, according to this article. The first step in a customer-driven approach is to determine what you want to learn from customers about your documentation. Next, identify sources—such as surveys, social networking tools, trade show events, and online forums—that will provide the right types of data to answer your questions; multiple data sources will give greater weight to your conclusions. Finally, summarize the collected data and distill it into “a manageable set of frequently occurring common themes.” Let customers know their comments have been received, the author notes, so they will continue to submit feedback.

Lyn Gattis

**Using storytelling to elicit design guidance for medical devices**


“Medical device designers must understand the complex context of use within a health care environment to ensure product usability. Designers must overcome domain-specific obstacles during usability research, such as patient privacy standards, which prevent designers from observing practitioners in context. In this project, we investigated storytelling as an alternative elicitation method for medical device requirements when direct observations are limited or not possible. While gathering requirements for an infusion pump, we compared the types of information elicited by focus groups, interviews, and storytelling sessions. Several advantages and implications for the use of story-telling in usability research are discussed.”

Sherry Southard