

Trends in User Assistance

by Neil Perlin

Technical communicators face a tangled avalanche of change in 2007. This column takes a look at some of the changes in tools, technologies, methodologies, and business climate. But first, a note about the term “user assistance” itself. [**Read more...**](#)

- [50th Anniversary](#)
-

Quiz Time!

Last month, we saw how the essential mission of PCS and its predecessors has remained constant over the years. However, the tools we use to accomplish this mission have changed. Can you place the following events in order by the year (oldest to most recent)...[**Read more.**](#)

- [ABET](#)
-

New Beginnings

Since the fall of 2005, I have been documenting the preparations that marked each stage of the ABET accreditation process for the engineering and computer science programs at my institution. When the ABET accreditors paid their visit in late October this year, I found that I had the content for my next column on ABET. But wouldn't the fact of the site visit also mean the end of my ABET column for this newsletter? [**Read more.**](#)

- [Jobs](#)
-

Need Work?

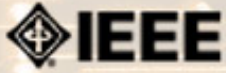
Several professional and academic jobs are posted on our jobs page[**Read more.**](#)

- [Reviews](#)
-

Keeping Up

If you are like me, you have stacks of books and magazines awaiting your attention and time, and once you fall behind, it often seems as though you will never catch up again. Here are a few periodicals that I always make time to read because they give me ideas and keep me informed in easily digestible chunks... [**Read More.**](#)

-



Feature

Trends in User Assistance

by Neil Perlin

Technical communicators face a tangled avalanche of change in 2007. This column takes a look at some of the changes in tools, technologies, methodologies, and business climate. But first, a note about the term “user assistance” itself.

The term appeared in the late ‘90s as a replacement for “help” because “help” came to be seen as too limiting. It implied a help file, but ignored online documents, web sites, etc. But even though “help” is too limited, “user assistance” is too broad; it can include anything technical communicators do since, in theory, it’s all supposed to assist the user. For this column, I’m focusing on online information. To begin...

The Continuing Convergence of the Web and Help

Until the late ‘90s, help and the web were typically viewed as two unrelated technologies, even when Microsoft released HTML Help in ‘97. This changed when eHelp introduced WebHelp as a RoboHelp output format. WebHelp let us create help as a web site, and help and the web began to converge. The convergence continues today as help authors move toward web styles and users look for help in places other than traditional help files.

(Elliott Masie, www.masie.com, gave an interesting illustration of this trend on the users’ parts in his speech at the 2006 IEEE PCS conference. He described asking a roomful of users where they looked first for help. The answer? Google. Technical communicators who ignore trends like this run the risk of their work becoming irrelevant.)

So what changes can we expect based on this convergence?

- **Web 2.0:** Web 2.0 isn’t one technology. It’s a mix of multiple technologies like CSS, AJAX, and XML, and a philosophy based on sharing of content, the ability of users to develop content (as in wikis), and the ability to integrate content from multiple sources into new, often unexpected applications - “mashups.” (Goggles (www.isoma.net/games/goggles.html) is a sample mashup, a flight simulator that re-uses Google maps for ground detail. (Thanks to Ed Marshall, Marshall Documentation Consulting, for this find.) At a basic level, Web 2.0 offers the ability for end-users to contribute content for help systems.

Web 2.0 is too broad to cover here, but there’s a good introductory article on it in the January 2007 issue of STC’s *Intercom*. I will discuss the application of Web 2.0 to help in more detail in the Bleeding Edge columns in the February and April issues of *Intercom*. For a detailed discussion of Web 2.0 by one of its original definers, Tim O’Reilly, see “What Is Web 2.0 – Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software” at www.oreillynet.com/lpt/a/6228.

- **Personalization:** Technical communicators typically create documentation on a mass scale: one document or help system for all the users. This approach works, but is going against a trend toward personalizing information and services on the web and in society overall. We've been able to create personalized help for years using conditionality, but new tools are using XML to take personalization to new levels of fineness. For information about the most powerful such application as of Q1 07, see the "Bleeding Edge" column in the February issue of *Intercom*.
- **Dynamic output:** As help becomes server-based and network speeds increase, it is becoming feasible to not ship a help system with a product. Instead, ship the entire help project and, using personalization features and the ability to generate the help from an authoring tool's command line, generate personalized help on-the-fly when the user asks for it.
- **Increased developmental rigor:** To make the new technologies and approaches work reliably and cost-effectively, content will become increasingly standardized by being developed using up-to-date GUI tools that meet mainstream technical standards.
- **Decline of older formats:** As help becomes increasingly browser-based or web-oriented, older, non-web-oriented or overly proprietary formats like Oracle Help, JavaHelp, and HTML Help will keep declining. Vista Help, with its Microsoft-centricity, may also be relegated to niche status, as happened with Help 2.0.

Changing Development Methodologies

One of the hot topics in the last few years has been structured content, but what exactly is it? The question has arisen several times on STC and other forums and is still not settled.

I can think of at least three definitions of "structured content" – content based on heading styles, based on templates with style sheets, or based on the content's being valid, in the XML sense of adhering to a DTD or schema. The biggest difficulty isn't technical, but rather in picking the definition that best fits a particular company's culture.

If a company is already creating online content (help or documentation) in HTML form, a move from HTML to XML will be difficult but feasible because the company is already thinking in online terms. So that company might decide to use the definition that calls for adherence to a DTD or schema. However, for companies that are just moving from hard-copy to online or just moving from the old WinHelp format to HTML or XML, the most they may be able to realistically handle is to start using style sheets and templates. So the business aspect of company culture will be just as important as the technical aspect.

A related hot sub-topic is the rise of DITA. DITA is essentially an XML language for the creation of programmatically structured content. DITA has been around for several years, but it's still confined to a small group of companies. However, with the growing interest in structured content within technical communication, and with evangelizing by IBM and OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards), DITA is slowly gaining traction. It's also becoming available as a plug-in for Word, which will accelerate its adoption.

New Forms of User Assistance

For many people, user assistance still consists of a help file and a hard-copy user manual but there are other forms and new ones are appearing, such as:

- **Visual help:** Unlike text-oriented help, which consists mainly of text with a few graphics added for illustration,

visual help consists mainly of graphics with text added for explanation. Tools like Captivate, Camtasia, the upcoming Mimic, and others let authors capture screen activity as a series of individual screen shots that act like frames in a movie, add effects like text annotation, animations, simulated mouse clicks, audio narration, and others, and play the result as a movie. Some of the tools let authors add video and create eLearning that can be linked to LMSs (Learning Management Systems) and other eLearning tools. And, in addition to their power, these tools are cheap – from free to about \$600, easy to learn – two days training to get up to speed, and produce Flash output with no coding.

- **Video help:** Video is great for teaching physical tasks or human interaction, but it's expensive to create and students have to watch the training in a training room away from their work environment. This is changing with the spread of handheld devices that can show video. These devices existed for years, but were limited by their use of arcane video formats like QCIF. What made handheld video-based help realistic was Apple's Video iPod. Its popularity and use of a common video format essentially set a standard that makes it feasible to create training for use right on the job. At least one company, p.o.d.Training (www.podtraining.us), is doing so. Their web site is worth a look.
- **Virtual worlds:** Virtual worlds, particularly Second Life (www.secondlife.com), got noticed this year, and were written up in the magazines that you'd expect, like *Wired*, and those you wouldn't, like *Business Week*. The idea is simple; create a virtual world in which to create and run training and simulations. To find out more, run a Google search for creating training in Second Life.

Business Changes

For years, technical communication departments have acted as if they were separate from the business side of company operations, and thus, ignored issues like cost-justification, ROI, and strategy. The result was that doc groups often found themselves in a reactive mode. That attitude is now causing problems.

“Content” is becoming a strategic asset, unlike documentation, which management often views as a necessary evil; even though documentation is content. Because content is strategic, it attracts outside consultants. In order to compete, technical communicators are going to have to develop a business presence by doing three things:

- **Stop demanding perfection** and instead accept material that's “good enough” to serve its business purpose, even if it isn't perfect.
- **Learn the language of business.** Many documentation groups struggle for their funding, even for something as minor as one copy of a tool, because they're not cost-justifying the expenditure in terms that the Finance department wants. “Soft” metrics like customer satisfaction are useful, but what the Finance department generally wants is “hard” projections in dollar terms, such as increased revenue or decreased costs. Many accounting and finance textbooks and web sites offer formulas for such analyses.
- **Make sure the documentation work supports company strategy** and be able to tell management how. Without that, management can justifiably question why the doc group exists and consider outsourcing the work.

How Do We Deal With These Changes?

Five major recommendations:

- **Learn to use your tools correctly and effectively:** Get trained. Formal training is more expensive than learning on your own, but it's far more cost-effective.
- **Stay in the tool and technology mainstream:** Don't use dead tools, like ForeHelp, to create material in dead or

dying formats, like WinHelp, in order to avoid the cost of upgrading tools, retraining developers, and converting your material. The further out of the mainstream you are, the more expensive and disruptive it will be to get back in.

- **Learn about the environment and technologies behind technical communication:** You may never use DITA, but you should understand what it is in order to make good decisions about content strategy, outputs, and tools. Plus, you'll be better able to talk to engineering and IT.
- **Get involved with the business aspect of documentation.** Learn to develop business cases, read your company's strategic plan, and understand how your work affects the company's bottom line.
- **Set and enforce standards.** Standards support consistency today, and support the conversion to new formats tomorrow.

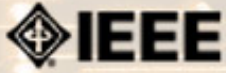
What If I Don't Want To Do All This?

As one person said to me at a recent STC meeting – “What if I don't want to do all this? I just want to be a writer. That's what I like.”

You can remain a pure writer, but that's not where the future of technical communication lies. Being adept with the technologies, the tools, the business aspect, and the strategic aspect is where our future lies.

Neil Perlin is president of Hyper/Word Services (www.hyperword.com) of Tewksbury, MA. He has 28 years experience in technical communication, with 22 in training, consulting, and development for online formats and tools like WinHelp, HTML Help, JavaHelp, CE Help, RoboHelp, Flare, Captivate, and some now known only in legend. Neil is a member of IEEE and STC, an associate fellow of the STC, and the founder and manager of the STC annual conference's Beyond the Bleeding Edge stem.

Copyright ©2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



ABET

New Beginnings

by Julia Williams

This month marks the end of one column and the beginning of another. Since the fall of 2005, I have been documenting the preparations that marked each stage of the ABET accreditation process for the engineering and computer science programs at my institution. When the ABET accreditors paid their visit in late October this year, I found that I had the content for my next column on ABET. But wouldn't the fact of the site visit also mean the end of my ABET column for this newsletter?

As it turns out, issues related to accreditation and assessment are still current in higher education, both within the United States and abroad; thus, they will be current on the pages of the *Newsletter* for a while longer. I was asked to continue with this column, but I offered to do so with a slight change of focus. I plan to continue addressing issues related to accreditation and assessment but more broadly defined; rather than contemplate the impact of ABET accreditation on only my institution, I plan to analyze the impact of ABET, as well as other accreditation bodies, as one component in a growing demand for accountability within higher education. And, I hope you will address your questions, concerns, and suggestions for future topics to me at [juliawilliams AT ieeepcs.org](mailto:juliawilliams@ieeepcs.org).

Winds of Change for Assessment and Accreditation

December 18, 2006

By now, you may have noticed that assessment and accreditation are more frequently in the news, and not just the daily news coming out of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. We also have Margaret Spellings, US Secretary of Education in the Bush administration, her "problem" to thank. Despite her prominent position in the education domain, she couldn't find information regarding Davidson College, the college her daughter was planning to attend. To hear Secretary Spellings tell it, she was unable to locate basic information regarding graduation and retention rates anywhere on the Davidson website. And how, Spellings posed rhetorically, could any parent, much less the Secretary of Education, make an informed decision regarding her child's future without hard data?

(http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2006-11-13-spellings-cover_x.htm)

As it turns out, Spellings' situation was misrepresented a bit in the media. The information Spelling sought was available on the Davidson website, although it would have taken some searching to locate it. In the end, Spelling's daughter did enroll at Davidson, but I'm sure that the secretary's observations regarding the college's webpage design resulted in serious changes to the Davidson's online presence, as well as some sleepless nights for their public relations office.

The story Spellings told was the background against which she reported on the work of her Commission on the Future of Higher Education, the group appointed to review issues of accountability in higher education, and the report they submitted to her on September 19, 2006, entitled, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education* (<http://www.ed.gov/>)

[about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html](http://www.ieeeeps.org/newsletter/pcsnews_feb2007_abet.php)).

According to a press release from the Department of Education (published on September 26, 2006), Secretary Spellings “created the Commission on the Future of Higher Education in September 2005 to develop a comprehensive strategy for postsecondary education that would better serve Americans and address the economic and workforce needs for our nation's future.” Since its formation, the Commission worked during the year, holding public meetings and hearings, and engaging “students and families, policymakers, business leaders and the academic community in a national dialogue about all key aspects of higher education.”

Spellings announced the findings of the Commission in the format of an Action Plan that focused on three components: Accessibility, Affordability, and Accountability.

According to Spellings, the first two components relate to making a college degree more available, not just financially but also academically, for students who may leave high school with a degree, but may still not be ready for college-level work. The third component, accountability, received the lion's share of attention in the press. According to the Department of Education (DOE press release, 9/26/2006), the Secretary's Action Plan includes the following work ahead for her department:

- Work with a consortium of states to build on and link together the 40 existing, privacy-protected higher education information systems.
- Explore incentives for states and institutions that collect and report student learning outcome data.
- Convene members of the accreditation community to recommend changes to the standards for recognition that will place a greater emphasis on results.
- Redesign the US Department of Education's college search website to allow consumers to weigh and compare institutions based on their individual interests and needs.

Components of the Action Plan

I believe that components of the Action Plan deserve additional notice. The “incentive for states and institutions that collect and report student learning outcomes data” represents Spellings’ call for a national student learning outcomes data system, something comparable to what is currently in use for K-12 students, which would track student achievement from kindergarten to the day a student graduates from college.

The system would also allow students and their families to compare colleges based on a national set of student learning outcomes. The ability to compare and weigh different institutions on the basis of a shared set of data points toward some version of national standards that could be used across all institutions, public or private, large or small, research or teaching focused.

Perhaps it is encouraging that the announcement in September was followed by action on the proposals. For instance, in November, Spellings convened a group of nationally recognized experts in the field of assessment and accreditation for an accreditation forum. Reporting on the forum, an official of the US Department of Education stated on November 29, 2006, that one of the goals of the accreditation forum was to take the work of the Spellings Commission and “work together for a more robust, more outcome-focused, results-centered system that will benefit students and parents and empower them with information. The accreditation forum also looked at ways to streamline and improve the accreditation process to support

innovation, promote consistency in accreditation standards, increase accountability, and become more transparent to the public.”

Despite the activities of the US Department of Education after the release of *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education*, the impact of the report and the subsequent forum is, at this time, uncertain. Spellings has announced a event for the spring of 2007 that will continue to plan for implementing the recommendations of both the Commission and the accreditation forum. While the Commission has called for the creation of a national data system that would track every student, the likelihood that such a system could be developed and maintained seems small.

Essentially, the Commission recommends a bureaucracy necessary to track every child in the United States, to report accurately the student’s progress with a national set of defined learning outcomes, and to ensure that no errors that could potentially undermine a student’s college prospects enter into the system; that bureaucracy could dwarf any other used to maintain a social program, even Social Security.

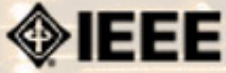
It seems unlikely too that "No Child Left Behind", the model for accountability in education that Spellings suggests could provide a template to start with, could find favor in higher education circles, especially private colleges with rich endowments. Finally, the election results of November 2006 point to a new climate in Washington DC; whatever the Commission recommendations might have been in September, they may not receive the same response from a Democrat-controlled US Congress in January 2007.

But we should not lull into a false sense of security regarding the future of the Commission and its impact of higher education. All of us in the US college and university system, should remain aware of the public dissatisfaction with the opacity of the internal workings of colleges and universities. There is some possibility that we can create common indicators that would allow consumers to compare colleges against each other.

Communication skills, for instance, are a recurring theme in most, if not all, outcome sets; communication seems to be appropriate to engineering students, as well as nursing students. We can also determine ways to measure whether students leave college with the skills they need to enter the modern workforce. The important idea here, however, is that we in higher education should take the initiative to define the outcomes, develop the measures, and demonstrate the results with data in response to these demands. The alternative is to wait and let the US Department of Education do the defining for us.

Julia Williams is Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, and is an associate professor of English at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

Copyright ©2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



Society News: 50th Anniversary

Quiz Time!

by 50th Anniversary Committee

Last month, we saw how the essential mission of PCS and its predecessors has remained constant over the years. However, the tools we use to accomplish this mission have changed. Can you place the following events in order by the year (oldest to most recent)?

- ARPANET links first four universities
- Release of Adobe® Type Library fonts
- Invention of the ball point pen
- Invention of carbon paper
- First commercially-released electric typewriter
- First email program
- Release of Apple Computer's personal graphical user interface
- Formation of the IRE's Professional Group on Engineering Writing and Speech
- Invention of Liquid Paper correction fluid
- Release of first commercial modem by AT&T
- Release of MS-DOS 1.0
- Invention of the modern-day pencil
- Invention of the rubber eraser
- "Technical Writing" by T.A. Rickard published
- "Theory and Practice of Technical Writing" by Samuel Chandler Earle published
- First commercially-released typewriter

__ Release of the Tandy TRS-80

__ Release of Microsoft WinHelp 1.0

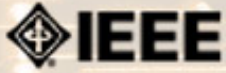
__ Release of WordStar word processing software

__ Release of first Xerox photocopier

Note that we aren't asking for the specific year - some of them are a bit nebulous! Just put the events into chronological order, oldest first.

Send an email with your guesses to Brenda Huettner at **[bphuettner AT ieee.org](mailto:bphuettner@ieee.org)**. We'll hold a drawing of all correct answers, and award the winner a prize!

Copyright © 2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



President's Column

The Right to Run...

By Luke Maki

As I write this, we are at a time just before the first AdCom meeting of the year, and before the first TAB meeting of the year as well. I have many things on my plate to work in anticipation of both. However, in light of a recent e-mail I received, I choose to write about that e-mail, what it represents, and why I think it important to ask you to support the writer of the e-mail. Hopefully, you will agree with me and take action.

So, what is this all about? Well, a person by the name of Ralph W. Wyndrum, Jr., is conducting a petition campaign to be placed on the ballot this year for the position of IEEE 2008 President-Elect. I am not a real long-timer in IEEE, so I am not sure how often this happens (in particular, for this, the highest office for a volunteer), but the IEEE Bylaws allow for it (<http://www.ieee.org/web/aboutus/whatis/bylaws/i-308.html#Petition>).

I initiated a discussion with the AdCom members about the posting of his e-mail in the *PCS Newsletter*. I myself was wondering if the inclusion of it would be proper, fair to other candidates for this position, or potentially imply that the PCS is endorsing this candidate over and above the other candidates. In short, there was enough concern expressed by some that only his biographical information would appear (and not that of the other candidates) that inclusion in the *Newsletter* would be questionable.

I respect the dialogue that occurred, and the opinions of those who advised caution, and wouldn't have it any other way. However, I decided to take it upon myself (and this column) to at least publicize Mr. Wyndrum's request to be considered. Why? Because I feel he has the right to run...it is that simple. *I am not, in this column, recommending he be the 2008 IEEE President here...* I am simply endorsing his right to be on the ballot as a candidate for that position. I will not recommend one candidate over the other, when it is time to vote...that is YOUR decision, based on a review of all candidates' qualifications and statements (that are provided later this year). You are all intelligent, informed people...which is why I am thinking that you might agree that the right to run is fundamental, and communicating how to make that happen for Mr. Wyndrum is a proper thing to do.

So, if you agree that Mr. Ralph W. Wyndrum, Jr. has a right to be on the ballot this year as a candidate for IEEE 2008 President-Elect, along with the candidates already identified to be on the ballot (Marc T. Apter, Pedro A. Ray, and John Vig, as noted at <http://www.ieee.org/web/aboutus/corporate/election/index.html>), then do the following:

1. Log into www.ieee.org/petition. You will need your member number and pin, OR your IEEE user name and password (IEEE web account information). The petition page will appear.
2. Sign the petition electronically.

Again, the opinion expressed above is my own. Do you have an opinion?

Please write me at luke.maki@ieee.org, I would love to hear from you.

Luke Maki is the current president of IEEE-PCS and works for The Boeing Company.

Copyright © 2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



Editor's Column

An Ode To Engineers

by Kit brown

I was more distracted than usual during the holidays this year, partly because I fell right before the holidays, badly sprained my ankle, and was on crutches for 2.5 weeks. (I'm mostly fine now.)

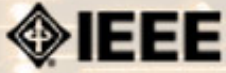
While I was laying around with an ice pack on my foot, I had the opportunity to contemplate how much we take our mobility and health for granted, and how many things in our lives are better or more efficient because of engineers. Crutches, for example--without them, I would have been completely immobilized because I wasn't supposed to put weight on my foot.

According to one website, evidence for the crutch extends back as early as 2830 BC in Egypt. I am sure that some ingenious person invented crutches shortly after the first hominids began walking upright and someone tripped over a tree root or rock and hurt his or her foot.

Other, more recent inventions, such as the microwave, remote control, and travel mug made it easier to cook, entertain myself, and get drinks without spilling as I hopped (crutches do make it difficult to carry things...).

At first I didn't mind the enforced quietude; I was in pain and tired anyway, and a friend was visiting and could help. The allure wore off after the first week, however, when I had to fend for myself with a very active border collie who was desperate for his walkies. Luckily, several dog-loving friends leaped at the chance to take Merlin up in the Boise foothills to run off some of his energy. I was glad that he has a microchip because on one of those runs, he lost all of his tags, and I would've been devastated if he'd gotten lost as well.

So thank you all you engineers out there who quietly make the world a much better and easier place because of your inventions.



Book Reviews

Keeping Up

by Kit brown

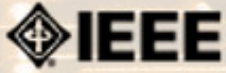
If you are like me, you have stacks of books and magazines awaiting your attention and time, and once you fall behind, it often seems as though you will never catch up again.

Here are a few periodicals that I always make time to read because they give me ideas and keep me informed in easily digestible chunks:

- ***Science News Weekly***: 12-16 pages of technical and scientific knowledge crammed into short articles that cover the gamut of scientific discovery and research, and sometimes they are even funny (in that geeky word play sort of way). Go to <http://www.sciencenews.org/> and check it out.
- ***Fast Company***: As a small business owner, I need to keep on top of trends in industry, and am always on the look out for interesting ideas. Managers and senior technical staff would benefit from reading these short (usually 1 page) articles to learn about the business side of the equation. With today's tight budgets, it's the business savvy managers and technical staff who will survive. Go to <http://www.fastcompany.com>.
- ***Multilingual***: (in the interest of full disclosure, I contribute regularly). I do a lot of work with the localization industry, and this magazine helps me to stay abreast of technological and business changes that affect my clients. They have quarterly guides on special topics, which I have often found invaluable. Go to <http://www.multilingual.com>.
- ***Motto***: (used to be Worthwhile Magazine). These short articles show how even small companies can be socially conscious and still make money. The focus is on doing business in a way that is fair and sustainable for all involved. We don't have to do things the old way...Go to <http://www.whatsyourmotto.com/>.

What's on your list? Inquiring minds want to know.

Email me at [pcsnews.editor AT ieee.org](mailto:pcsnews.editor@ieee.org); I would love to hear from you.



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 2 • February 2007

Tidbits

Editor's Note: I am always looking for strange, fun, or interesting technical communication tidbits. Please contribute freely.

Oscar Goes to Arnold Spielberg

From Institute Online, January 24, 2007

For the Electronic Cash Register, the Oscar Goes to Arnold Spielberg! The next time a cashier rings up your purchases, think of Arnold Spielberg.

It's thanks to Spielberg's "sales recorder", the first electronic cash register, that checkout is so easy and efficient. It's why the IEEE Computer Society honored Spielberg with its Computer Pioneer Award. **Read more...**

APS Professional Development Guide Available

From Mary Y Wisniewski

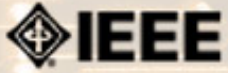
The APS Professional Development Guide has been posted on the APS website - (recently redesigned).

The link is:

<http://www.aps.org/careers/guidance/index.cfm>

and then click on "Professional Development Guide". Several past newsletter articles are referenced in the updated guide.

Copyright © 2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 2 • February 2007

Society News: PCS Events

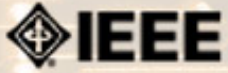
IPCC 2007

by IPCC Conference Committee

IPCC 2007 is in Seattle, Washington and will be a gala event celebrating PCS' 50th anniversary. Hope you can make it! The Call for Proposals is available and is due **24 January 2007**. (See the [Call for Articles](#) page.)

The 50th anniversary committee is already planning some great activities. See the [50th anniversary article](#) for more information.

Copyright © 2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 2 • February 2007

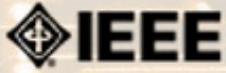
Society News: Member News

Membership Renewals

By Brenda Huettner, Membership Chair

It is time once again to renew your IEEE membership! New member benefits this year include IEEE.tv, a mentoring program, and new course offerings through IEEE Xpert Now program. If you renew your IEEE membership before December 31st, you'll get a free IEEE e-book (check out their catalog at www.ieee.org/press).

Copyright © 2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 2 • February 2007

Society: Non-Society Events

The following events are listed in chronological order with the earliest events first. This list is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to provide readers with information they may find helpful. It is updated each month.

New Master's Programs at Illinois Institute of Technology

Sarnoff Symposium

DocTrain 2007

SIN 2007

Society for Technical Communication

International Symposium on Integrated Network Management (IM 2007)

ISTAS 2007: International Symposium on Technology and Society

IEEE International Conference on Communications

CCCT 2007 **NEW!**

LavaCon 2007 **NEW!**

New Master's Programs at Illinois Institute of Technology

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Illinois Institute of Technology introduces three new professional Master's degree programs:

Master of Biomedical Imaging and Signals-addresses the interdisciplinary nature of the emerging biomedical engineering field with a targeted focus in medical imaging and biosignals.

Master of Power Engineering-provides concentrated training in the areas of power systems, power electronics, motor drives, and electric machines.

Master of VLSI and Microelectronics-offers specialized training in the areas of very large scale integrated-circuit

technology, CAD design, and microelectronics with electronic systems design applications.

These programs can be completed without a thesis or comprehensive exam. The GRE is waived for applicants who hold a B. S. degree in a related field from a U.S. institution, completed with a minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0. Degree requirements for these programs can be completed online.

Learn more about electrical and computer engineering at IIT: visit www.ece.iit.edu or contact Catherine Kozuch/O'Brien, Graduate Program Coordinator, IIT Armour College of Engineering, obrien@iit.edu, phone: +1 312.567.3043.

To inquire or apply online: www.grad.iit.edu

DocTrain 2007

Title: DocTrain 2007
Dates: 18 to 21 April 2007
Location: Vancouver, BC CANADA
URL: <http://www.doctrain.com>

Kit Brown (PCS News Editor) and Brenda Huettner (PCS Membership Manager) are speaking with their coauthor, Char James-Tanny, at this event.

Held in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, the theme of the 8th Annual Documentation & Training Conference is The User Experience. The conference features sessions and workshops that help technical communication professionals improve the usefulness of the information products they create.

Attendees receive:

- Access to over 40 sessions, symposia, demonstrations, and keynotes
- Choice of pre-conference half-day workshop on April 18
- Choice of post-conference half-day workshop on April 21
- Breakfast and carving station lunches on April 19-20
- Special pricing from the Marriott Pinnacle hotel, including unlimited in-room internet and long-distance calling to US & Canada
- First-year membership to **CM Professionals**
- Access to technology showcase and networking reception

Sarnoff Symposium 2007

Title: IEEE Sarnoff Symposium 2007
Dates: 30 April to 2 May 2007
Location: Princeton, NJ, USA
URL: www.sarnoffsymposium.org

This event showcases the newest technologies and products in Telecom and Multimedia.

The 2007 IEEE Sarnoff Symposium will continue its tradition of almost 30 years in bringing together professionals and industry experts to exchange information on the latest developments in communication systems, microwave technology and multimedia applications. The conference includes an exhibition of components, technologies, systems and services and also features tutorials and a student poster session.

The historic Nassau Inn, conveniently located in the heart of downtown Princeton, will again be the host for the event. Its rustic ambiance and sophisticated charm make it one of New Jersey's premier hotels.

Besides the technical paper presentations the Symposium will include tutorials, student paper poster presentations, executive panels, and exhibitions.

International Conference on Security of Information and Networks (SIN 2007)

Title:	International Conference on Security of Information and Networks (SIN 2007)
Dates:	8-10 May 2007
Location:	Salamis Bay Conti Resort Hotel, Gazimagusa (TRNC), North Cyprus
URL:	http://www.sinconf.org/

Dates to Remember:

Workshop Proposals Due:	31 December 2006
Proposal Acceptance Notification Date:	10 January 2007
Conference Paper Submission Due:	14 February 2007
Workshop Paper Submission Due:	15 February 2007
Tutorial Proposal Submission Due:	21 February 2007
Tutorial Notification Date:	9 March 2007
Author Notification:	19 March 2007
All Papers Camera Ready:	5 April 2007

Organized By:

- Faculty of Engineering, Eastern Mediterranean University, Gazimagusa (TRNC), North Cyprus
- Faculty of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey

Sponsored By:

- Scientific & Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) (pending)
- National Research Institute of Electronics and Cryptology (UEKAE)
- IEEE Turkey Section
- IEEE Computer Society Turkey Branch
- Chamber of Computer Engineers, TRNC, North Cyprus

Hosted By:

- Computer Engineering Department and Internet Technologies Research Center (ITRC), Eastern Mediterranean University, Gazimagusa (TRNC), North Cyprus

The International Conference on Security of Information and Networks (SIN 2007) provides an international forum for presentation of research and applications of security in information and networks. The SIN 2007 conference features contributed as well as invited papers and tutorials on practice and applications. Its drive is to convene a high quality, well-attended, and up-to-date conference on scientific and technical issues of security in information, networks, and systems.

Conference main theme is Information Assurance, Security, and Public Policy, that is, by another name, "Effecting Security in the Age of e-X", where X could stand for any buzzword such as commerce, tourism, banking, wallet, learning,... Other themes vying for the top spot are "Security Development Lifecycle: Promises, Practices, Findings", "High-Assurance Design", "Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and Identity Management", and "VoIP & Wireless Access: Boon or Bust for Enterprise Security".

Society for Technical Communication Conference 2007

Title:	Technical Communication Summit
Dates:	13-16 May 2007
Location:	Minneapolis, MN USA
URL:	http://www.stc.org/54thConf/

Several PCS AdCom members are speaking and/or attending this conference.

Make the Technical Communication Summit--STC's annual conference--your primary source of learning about technical communication. Whether you're a novice or senior practitioner, manager or researcher, the Summit caters to your need for education and professional growth with:

- pre-conference seminars
- learning sessions
- keynote speakers
- networking opportunities

IM 2007

Title:	10th IFIP/IEEE International Symposium on Integrated Network Management (IM 2007)
Dates:	21-25 May 2007
Location:	Munich, Germany
URL:	www.ieee-im.org

Proposals are due **24 August 2006!**

The Tenth IFIP/IEEE International Symposium on Integrated Management (IM 2007) will be held 21-25 May 2007 in

Munich, Germany. IM 2007 will present the latest technical advances in the area of management, operations and control of networks, networking services, networked applications, and distributed systems. Held in odd-numbered years since 1989 and taking turns with its sibling conference NOMS, IM 2007 will build on the successes of its predecessors and serve as the primary forum for exchange among the research, standards, vendor and user communities in the field of integrated management. The symposium is sponsored by the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) Working Group 6.6 on Management of Networks and Distributed Systems, and by the IEEE Communications Society Technical Committee on Network Operations and Management (CNOM).

Integrated management of networked systems is facing new challenges, stemming from a combination of rapidly evolving technologies and an increased scrutiny from corporate customers. At the same time, as IT and network services become more and more ubiquitous, their reliability and performance become more critical for all kinds of enterprises. The resulting demands for improving and verifying service quality must be met in an environment of increasingly distributed and decentralized service provisioning, accelerated service lifecycles, and unprecedented security challenges. Today's IT management issues involve many diverse problems in controlling heterogeneous IT infrastructures, often across organizational boundaries. However, new and difficult challenges are emerging while aligning technical and organizational IT management to business requirements, thus calling for integrating management tools and measures "from bits to business value".

IM 2007 will be organized into technical and application sessions, panels, tutorials and workshops. In addition, it will feature an industrial experience track to share practical lessons learned by the user and vendor communities, posters, birds-of-a-feather sessions, and vendor exhibits. In the tradition of previous events, we strive to make the IM 2007 Symposium the highest quality professional event of the year. Paper submissions will undergo a stringent review process implemented by the Technical Program Committee, which includes the most respected experts in the field. We encourage papers that break new ground or present insightful results based on experience with integrated management of networks, systems, applications and services.

ISTAS 2007

Title:	ISTAS: International Symposium on Technology and Society
Dates:	1-2 June 2007
Location:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada USA
URL:	http://www.unlv.edu/faculty/dmh/ISTAS2007/

Papers at the conference will cover a variety of relevant subtopics, from gaming technology to natural and anthropogenic catastrophes, as well as other traditional ISTAS topics. The conference will be sponsored by IEEE-SSIT, with the Risk Assessment and Policy Association, the UNLV Department of Environmental Studies and the UNLV Institute for Security Studies as co-sponsors.

For more information, contact Conference Chair David M. Hassenzahl at david.hassenzahl@unlv.edu.

IEEE International Conference on Communications

Title:	IEEE ICC
Dates:	24-28 June 2007

Location: Glasgow, Scotland UK
URL: <http://www.ieee-icc.org/2007/>

The Conference addresses key themes on "Smart Communications Technologies for Tomorrow". The program will feature a General Conference, 10 Specific Symposia, Applications Sessions, and Tutorials. Prospective authors are invited to submit original technical papers for oral or poster presentations at ICC 2007 and publication in the Conference Proceedings. (IEEE Communications Society policy states that all accepted ICC 2007 technical presenters must register at the full or limited rate. For authors presenting multiple papers, one full or limited registration is valid up to three papers).

CCCT 2007

Conference: CCCT 2007
Dates: 12-15 July 2007
Location: Orlando, Florida
Website: <http://www.info-cyber.org/ccct2007>

Proposals Due 8 March 2007!

CCCT '07 is an International Conference that will bring together researchers, developers, practitioners, consultants and users of Computer, Communications and Control Technologies, with the aim to serve as a forum to present current and future work, solutions and problems in these fields, as well as in the relationships among them. Consequently, efforts will be done in order to promote and to foster the analogical thinking required by the Systems Approach for interdisciplinary cross-fertilization, "epistemic things" generation and "technical objects" production.

CCCT Conferences are yearly events intended to serve as an encounter point for Computer, Communications and Control Technologies researchers, practitioners, consultants and users who have been interchanging ideas, research results and innovations in the mentioned areas and other related topics. Analytical as well as synthetical thinking represents the infrastructural support of the papers presented in CCCT conferences. Synthetical thinking supported papers inside the Information Systems area, as well as its relationships (analogies, "epistemic things", "technical synthetical objects", hybrid systems, cross/fertilization, etc.) with other areas.

CCCT '07 Organizing Committee invite authors to submit their original and unpublished works, innovations, ideas based on analogical thinking, problems that require solutions, position papers, case studies, etc., in the fields of computer, communication and control, as well as in the relationships between two of these areas or among the three of them.

Papers might be submitted via web page **Papers Submission** option, as brief abstracts (100-400 words), extended abstracts (400-2000 words) or as draft papers (2000-5000 words). Reviews will be done for both kinds of submissions.

LavaCon 2007

Conference: LavaCon® 2007
Dates: 28-30 October 2007
Location: New Orleans, LA USA
Website: <http://www.lavacon.org>

LavaCon is a conference for advanced technical communication professionals-senior technical writers, documentations managers and other professionals interested in learning how to deploy and manage technical communication projects.

LavaCon® and the Greater New Orleans chapter of the Project Management Institute® and will be co-hosting a professional development summit this fall.

GLOBECOM 2007

Conference:	GLOBECOM 2007
Dates:	26-30 November 2007
Location:	Washington, DC USA
Proposals Due Date:	15 March 2007; 12 noon EST
Acceptance Date:	1 July 2007; 12 noon EST
Final Paper Due Date:	1 September 2007; 12 noon EST
Website:	www.ieee-globecom.org/2007

This year, the IEEE Communications Society marks the 50th Anniversary of its annual IEEE Global Telecommunications Conference (IEEE GLOBECOM 2007) and will sponsor this conference in Washington, D.C.

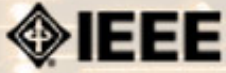
Washington D.C. provides a unique opportunity to explore several areas of communications related to government, military, as well as industry and academia. The Washington, D.C. metro area also offers participants an opportunity for exploring the numerous monuments, museums and historical sites for which the capital city is most famous.

The theme of the IEEE GLOBECOM 2007 conference is "Innovate ● Educate ● Accelerate", which exemplifies the accomplishments that we are hoping achieve during this special GLOBECOM Anniversary Conference.

The technical program of IEEE GLOBECOM 2007 will consist of the General Symposium, 9 Technical Symposia, Tutorials and Workshops, Design and Developers and a Student Program.

Papers will be presented in the following topics:

- General Symposium (The General Symposium will only accept papers on topics not covered by other symposia listed below)
- Ad-Hoc and Sensor Networking
- Communication Theory
- Internet Protocol
- Multimedia Communications, Software and Services
- Optical Networks and Systems
- Performance Modeling, QOS and Reliability
- Signal Processing
- Wireless Communications
- Wireless Networking



Calls for Articles/Proposals/Volunteers

Lavacon 2007 Call for Speakers

PCS Needs a Webmaster

Today's Engineer

Technical Communication, STC's journal

LavaCon 2007 Call for Proposals

Conference:	LavaCon® 2007
Dates:	28–30 October 2007
Location:	New Orleans, LA USA
Website:	http://www.lavacon.org

LavaCon is a conference for advanced technical communication professionals-senior technical writers, documentations managers and other professionals interested in learning how to deploy and manage technical communication projects.

LavaCon® and the Greater New Orleans chapter of the Project Management Institute® and will be co-hosting a professional development summit this fall.

Sessions and Workshops

The target audiences for the summit are project leaders (both documentation and non-documentation) wanting continuing education on how to manage projects, to stay current on the latest management and communication tools and technology, and to develop management-related “soft skills” such as leadership, workplace negotiation, conflict management, etc.

Breakout sessions will be 60 minutes long (mornings), hands-on workshops either 2 or 3 hours long (afternoons). Sessions requiring more than 60 minutes to cover can be split over two sessions (part I and part II).

Speakers receive free conference registration, and are welcome to attend all three days.

If interested presenting, please email the following information to **Jack Molisani**:

- A short description of session(s) or workshop(s) you would like to present
- A brief bio, including a list of other conferences at which you've spoken

Speaker slots are limited and we always receive far more proposals than we can accept, so please don't spend too much time on the initial proposal—just a brief description (a paragraph and a few bullets) to start. Speakers whose topics make the “short list” will be asked to provide a more detailed proposal later.

Seeking an IEEE-PCS Webmaster

If you are interested, and have the required skills and experience, consider applying to become the next PCS Webmaster. PCS is in the process now of revamping both its web site (www.ieeepcs.org) and its electronic communication forum, PECO (<https://www.ieeecommunities.org/ieee.pcs>). We're looking for a new volunteer webmaster to help improve the quality of both so that they become more useful, engaging electronic resources. The Webmaster is automatically a member (and a very valued one!) of the PCS Electronic Information Committee.

As PCS Webmaster, you would contribute to the redesign of the site and forum, and after that process is completed, you would continue to maintain both. The details of all the position's duties as well as experience and skills required to be eligible for it are listed below. Applications will be accepted and reviewed until the position is filled.

If you have questions, contact **Brian Still**, PCS Electronic Information Committee Chair.

Webmaster Position Qualifications

Position Title:	Webmaster
Position Closing Date:	Open until filled
Pay:	N/A (volunteer part-time position)
PCS Membership Required:	Not to apply but must be IEEE PCS student or full member to hold the position

Position Duties:

Responsible for performing day-to-day site maintenance on IEEE-PCS website, ensuring navigation and browser compatibility, providing as-needed consultation or programming for other PCS electronic information projects (i.e., Newsletter, IPCC), and maintaining and developing small web applications. Additional responsibilities include writing maintainable code, serving on the EIC committee, assisting in the development of updated layouts, updating all site content, and advising PCS on how to best optimize its content for online deployment.

Required Skills/Experience:

- 2+ years HTML and CSS hand-coding experience (i.e., coding without the aid of an HTML WYSIWYG editor program).
- 2+ years Dreamweaver experience (including the ability to create and edit Dreamweaver templates).
- 2+ years experience using PHP/MySQL to create, deploy and maintain database-driven applications.
- Thorough knowledge of browser compatibility issues, image conversion for online use, and W3C accessibility

guidelines.

- Basic familiarity with image editing applications such as Fireworks or Photoshop.
- Willingness and availability to post reasonable content additions or changes to the IEEE PCS Web site in less than 72 hours.
- Active interest in IEEE and the Professional Communication field.

How to Apply:

If you are interested and possess the required skills and experience above, please send an email to **Brian Still**, Electronic Information Committee Chair.

The email should include a brief statement of interest and an attached resume/vita. URLs of web sites previously designed and deployed also would be helpful.

IEEE-USA Seeks Articles for *Today's Engineer*

by George McClure

PCS has members who write clearly and well on various topics. We are looking for authors who would be willing to offer articles (750 to 1500 words) on writing tips, presentations, organizing proposals - even recasting résumés - or other topics that would be welcomed by our 16,000+ monthly readers.

Technology topics can be made interesting, too.

Contact: George McClure at g.mcclure@ieee.org.

***Technical Communication* Special Issue Seeking Submissions**

Contributed by Kirk St. amant

500-word Proposal Due:	15 December 2006
Draft Manuscript Due:	15 March 2007
Final Paper Due :	15 June 2007
Publication Date:	November 2007

Technical Communication, the journal of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), is currently soliciting article proposals for an upcoming special issue on the review and assessment of technical communication programs in higher education. This special issue will be published in November 2007, and the guest editors are Kirk St.Amant of Texas Tech University and Cynthia Nahrwold of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Description

The review process is central to creating and maintaining effective programs in any field. In technical communication, this process is made more complex as the discipline draws from industry and academic practices when preparing students for life after graduation. Additionally, the nature of instructional delivery is changing as more schools develop online classes and degree programs to address the needs of different students. These factors mean the program review process in technical communication must be a subject of continual research and updating for it to address industry, academic, and technology trends in a way that provides meaningful feedback to departments. This special issue of Technical Communication will examine how program review and program assessment processes should be viewed, practiced, and revised to develop courses and curricula that address the needs of academe and industry today and in the future.

Possible Topics for This Issue

Ideas we want to examine in this special issue include how the program review or program assessment processes can do the following:

- Prepare or revise programs for the business and social environments of the future
- Bridge the academic and industry divide through educational and research partnerships
- Include industry in the program review, assessment, and development processes
- Develop criteria for conducting effective and meaningful program reviews and assessments
- Establish criteria for reviewing and assessing new (for example, online) approaches and programs
- Internationalize the review process
- Use the program review process to create educational standards across the field
- Foster new research agendas and foci that address teaching, research, and practice equally
- Address new models for delivering instruction
- Develop courses and curricula that best prepare students for life after graduation

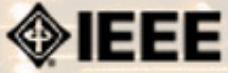
To that end, the guest editors welcome proposals for articles addressing these or related topics.

Types of Submissions

The guest editors welcome case studies and reports on experiences related to these processes; opinion pieces; literature reviews and annotated bibliographies; original research; and tips or best practices for implementing program reviews or assessments within a university, college, or community college setting.

Contact Information

Completed proposals or questions about either proposal topics or this special issue should be sent to Kirk St.Amant at kirk.st-amant@ttu.edu. All proposals and papers will be peer-reviewed.



Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 2 • February 2007

Society News: AdCom News

Next AdCom Meeting

By IEEE-PCS AdCom

The next meeting will be sometime in early February. The winter meeting is a virtual meeting done via conference call, so contact [Mark Haselkorn](#) or [Muriel Zimmerman](#) if you have agenda items.

Other meetings this year:

- Late May at the IEEE Headquarters in Piscataway, New Jersey, USA. (Date still being finalized)
- Weekend before the IPCC 2007 in Seattle, WA. IPCC is 1-3 October.

IPCC 2006 Pictures

Pictures are now available from the IPCC 2006 conference. [View them here!](#)

Many thanks to Dr. Takashi Okuda for taking the banquet pictures when my camera wasn't working.

Copyright ©2007 IEEE Professional Communication Society. All rights Reserved.