

Writing Effective Editorial Comments

By Dhupinder K Malhotra

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Uncertainty avoidance is the desire to avoid indefinite or unknown situations, and it can have a significant impact on how people interact with science and technology. All of us have to deal with uncertainty. The status of friends, family, health, employment, and safety all speak to a universal need to limit the unknown. ...[Read more](#)

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Feature

Writing Effective Editorial Comments

By Dhupinder K Malhotra

The role of editing in the writing process, as we all understand, is to enhance the quality of a document. Documentation can take many forms, ranging from the product documentation that the company needs to provide to the users of their product to training manuals, online help, books, websites, reports and so on. If the documentation is complete and accurate, and serves the user's purpose well, the user develops a trust for the product or service. However, shoddy documentation that is full of semantic and grammatical errors, may even cause the user to question the quality of the product or service.

Editing is one of the most powerful and widely used means for ensuring the quality of a document. Editors first ascertain the intended audience and their expectations from the documentation, based on the user's information needs. Next, the editor reads and comprehends the document to validate its content. In the process, they also spot and try to correct any technical, semantic, structural, or grammatical flaws.

While an editor can immediately make edits for flaws that they are sure are flaws, in situations the editors might think that they cannot make edits without the consent of the authors. Or, an editor might think that the author should provide some additional information or rework on certain areas of the document. Editors use comments to pinpoint such areas in a document that require the author's attention.

In this article, I discuss the “what”, “when”, and “how” of comments in the context of electronic editing.

What are comments?

Comments highlight areas in a document that require the author's attention or action. Visualize them as flags in a document seeking the author's attention or directing a user to take a corrective action. Generally, editors insert comments for the author of the document. However, authors can also insert comments for an editor, or one editor might insert a comment for another editor. The rationale behind editorial comments remains the same in every scenario - they require either an action or a note to be taken for something in the document. In this article, I focus on the comments that an editor provides electronically for the author's attention.

Editors can specify comments for the author in two ways:

- Placing the comments within the document using the built-in commenting feature of the text editor within the authoring application.
- Specify the comments outside of the document by referencing the sections within the document that require the author's attention. This information can be enclosed in an e-mail accompanying the reviewed document.

When to insert comments?

An editor can insert comments in a document under any or a combination of the following situations:

- When the document has ambiguities and contradictions. For example, consider the following text from a document:

*The binary IP address for Machine A is
11000000.10101001.11110000.00000101. Let us now convert this into
dotted decimal representation.¶
11000000.10101001.11110000.00000101¶
=(128+64).(128+32+8+1).(128+64+32+16).(4+1)¶
=192.169.240.5¶*

As you may have noticed,

the binary IP address in the first sentence differs from the binary address in the calculations. What is the correct binary address for Machine A?

- When there is a lack of clarity in the text of the document because of improper sentence construction. This can happen when the document has been written in a hurry and the author could hardly get time to self-review the document. For example, consider the following text:

*If file A.ext exists, but is a directory rather than a file, does not exist but
cannot be created, or cannot be opened, a fatal error occurs.¶*

- When the author “seems” to have deviated from the original context. One of the reasons for this apparent deviation could be that the necessary connections between two or more disparate sections are missing. This might happen if the author assumes that the readers will be able to provide the necessary context themselves. In such a situation, the editor and author jointly need to analyze the expertise level of the targeted group of readers and take an appropriate action.
- When the document is incomplete. The document can be incomplete at either a micro or macro level. At a macro level, the document may not have covered the required information. For example, a document discussing the causes of a problem X, may list a, b, and c as the causes, but may discuss only causes a and b. An editor’s comment, in such a situation, can inquire the reason for non-inclusion of cause c.

A micro-level issue may manifest itself as information missing from a specific unit, section, or paragraph of the document. An editor may come across a document containing test items for an online course, in which feedback for a particular test item includes feedback for the correct answer only, and none for the incorrect options or the distractors. The editor’s comments, in such situations, may ask the author to fill in the missing parts.

- When the given information may be complete, as a self-contained unit, but inadequate for the purpose of the document. Extending the example from the previous point, an author may provide feedback for the correct answer as well as the distractors; however the feedback may not truly justify why the correct answer is correct and why any of the distractors isn’t the correct answer.

Or, perhaps, the document may use an abbreviation or an acronym without first acquainting the user with its expansion.

- When the author uses (a) term(s) inconsistently within the document. For instance, use of “datastore” and “data store” to refer to the same entity - a storehouse for data. This is a very simple term. An editor may encounter inconsistent use of technical terms that they may not be familiar with. They may not be in a position to correct the inconsistency without prior consent from the author. An editor’s comment may inquire about the correct usage in such a case.
- When the editors want the authors to ensure that the edits made in the document do not, inadvertently, alter the intended sense. For instance, an editor may delete some repeated information from the document, or reorder certain

paragraphs. Perhaps, the redundant information and the original order of paragraphs are an intentional act.

- There can be other situations, such as non-working hyperlinks, insufficient information about the source of an image, non-compliance with the templates or formats prescribed for a document, and incorrect calculations. Consider the following text:

There are three main players in the telecom sector – Company X, Company Y, and Company Z. Following are their respective market shares:

- *Company X – 54%*
- *Company Y – 20%*
- *Company Z – 30%*

Here, the sum of respective percentage market shares of Companies X, Y, and Z adds up to more than 100%.

How to write Comments?

A good editorial comment, just like a good error message for a software product, should convey the following information:

- What is the problem?
- What is the possible cause of the problem?
- What is the suggested remedy to correct the problem?

Following are some guidelines for writing effective editorial comments:

Insert complete and precise comments, providing all the three components of a good comment, as discussed above.

Whenever authors encounter incomplete or vague comments, they may send the document back to the editor for clarifications, the editor may clarify, and the author may then respond back with the corrected document. These round trips can be a real threat to the timelines.

An editor's comments should always describe the problem in detail and help the author address the problem by suggesting solutions. For instance, if there is a fault in the author's sentence construction; rather than asking the author to rephrase the sentence, an editor may provide alternative construction(s) to the author. The author can then validate the accuracy of the sentence or enhance it further.

Insert global comments (at the top of the document) to bring the author's attention to issues present at multiple locations in the document. For instance, an editor may write a global comment requesting the author to use the authoring templates, indent and format the code properly, or, perhaps, ask the author to refrain from using colors in the document. If it is feasible, insert a comment wherever the situation referred to in the global comment occurs in the document.

However, if the effort involved in editing the document before and after the author addresses the global comments is equal, it is a good idea to ask the author to address the global comments prior to editing.

Note your observations in a comment along with (a) supporting argument(s) and some source (reference to a book or a web site) validating your standpoint. If you differ from the author at a particular point in the document, these comments will support your opinion.

Comments should never be personal or harsh. An editor needs to be very careful with the choice of words for their comments. The objective is to provide constructive feedback that will enable the author to improve the document, not to

attack or belittle the author.

Ensure that comments are complete and grammatically correct. Avoid using slang, jargon or short-hand. Doing so will improve your credibility with the author.

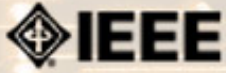
Volunteer to assist the authors with managing the editorial comments in the document. Some authors may need assistance with the technicalities of viewing, inserting, editing, and deleting editorial comments in a text editor, or with understanding the electronic editing process.

Never put comments like “Same as the previous comment”, “Same as the next comment”, or “Same as second comment”. If the authors delete the referred comment, chances are they may end up referring to the wrong comment.

While the commenting process is one of the methods of interaction between an author and an editor, a direct, in-person interaction between the two individuals has advantages. Reviewing the comments with the author reduces transmission time by providing an opportunity for the author and the editor to together to create a high-quality document. However, such in-person communication may not be feasible in all setups. Regardless of the type of interaction between an author and an editor, editorial comments should have the power to bridge all gaps and help produce a high-quality document.

***Dhupinder K Malhotra** works as an Information Developer with India Software Lab (ISL) of IBM. A graduate in Mathematics and a post graduate in Computer Applications, Dhupinder has been involved in editing, technical writing, e learning, and web content development for the past 4.5 years.*

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PCS Website Update

New, Improved PCS Virtual Community Online October 1

by Brian Still and Sandy Bartell

For the past few months efforts have been underway to overhaul the PCS web site. Beginning with member surveys early this year, followed by the testing and eventual adoption of a suitable open source content management system (CMS), the process has now reached a point where we can report that on **October 1, 2007**—timed to coincide with the start of this year's IPCC in Seattle—the new PCS online home will go live.

The web address will remain the same: www.ieeepcs.org. However, almost everything else, including the way it looks and what it offers, will change. Here are just a few of the features that will be found on the new PCS virtual community:

- Timely podcasts from experienced communication professionals offering useful training and tips on a variety of subjects. Senior IEEE Member George Hayhoe, an award winning, internationally recognized expert in professional communication, will host the first podcast, “Three Tips for Effective Email.”
- A constantly updated Events Calendar detailing opportunities for training or for meeting face-to-face with other technical, scientific, and engineering professionals interested in improving their professional communication skills.
- Pages dedicated to the regions where you work and live.

Member-Only Access

Around October 1, members will be able to log in to access certain features available just to them. They will also be able to maintain their own blog and participate in discussion forums.

Registered members will also be able to post comments on particular stories or pages on the site. For example, when abstracts of presentations accepted for the 2008 IPCC in Montreal come online, PCS members will be able to respond to them, or to comments other members have posted about them. Hopefully, this will initiate fruitful and informed discussions that extend the impact of face-to-face meetings such as conferences, and, at the same time, also strengthen the bonds of our virtual community.

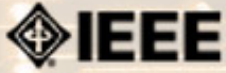
Volunteer Opportunities

Along the lines of establishing a true sense of community, we're looking for volunteers interested in playing a more active role in contributing to the support of the site. So if you'd like to help us maintain a region home page, or write stories, create podcasts, moderate discussion forums—whatever else you that enables us to make the PCS virtual community a vibrant, useful resource—let Brian ([brian.still AT ttu.edu](mailto:brian.still@ttu.edu)) know.

Look for the new virtual PCS community in early October.

Brian Still and Sandy Bartell are members of the IEEE-PCS AdCom. Brian is an assistant professor of technical communication and rhetoric at Texas Tech University. Sandy Bartell works for The Boeing Company in Seattle, Washington.

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The Edge of Culture

Editor's Note: Matt is our new columnist on international communication. His column will appear every other month.

Into the Unknown

by **Matthew McCool**

Uncertainty avoidance is the desire to avoid indefinite or unknown situations, and it can have a significant impact on how people interact with science and technology.

All of us have to deal with uncertainty. The status of friends, family, health, employment, and safety all speak to a universal need to limit the unknown. Countries and cultures that experience high levels of uncertainty usually have some combination of economic instability, low employment, unreliable health infrastructure, political reorganization, or war. All of these problems elevate the degree of uncertainty that people feel, and it can take years or even decades to be free from these constraints. It should not be surprising, then, to learn that the unknown can have a powerful impact on many aspects of our lives.

Background

Uncertainty avoidance was first studied by the American sociologist James March who discovered its importance within an organizational context. March applied basic principles from social psychology to organizational communication. By analyzing the functional roles of employees within an organizational context, March was able to determine that select employees and companies appeared more uncertain than others. The Irish psychologist Richard Lynn found a similar correlation in reference to anxiety, an analogous emotional state. Lynn discovered, perhaps paradoxically, that low anxiety cultures had higher rates of caffeine and caloric consumption, coronary heart disease, and psychosis, the same kind of concerns associated with uncertainty avoidance.

Societies have developed three general approaches for dealing with uncertainty, including a strong legal system, science or technology, and religion. A strong legal system provides security by making sure people are protected by an authoritative system higher than the individual. One does not need to be especially concerned about the moral character of other people when the legal consequences are swift, fair, and precise.

Science and technology provides analytical tools for controlling the environment and curing disease. And, religion works by appealing to a higher metaphysical authority, presumably when law and science cannot. Before we look at a specific example of uncertainty as it relates to a simple online factor, it's worth noting additional differences between high and low uncertainty cultures.

High vs Low Uncertainty Avoidance Cultures

Uncertainty avoidance is also related to food, water, money, and pursuits of knowledge. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are more likely to consume fresh fruits and vegetables, drink mineral water, prefer natural sugar, invest in real estate and precious gems, and accept medical advice from doctors rather than nurses. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures, on the other hand, often demonstrate a rather different perspective. Instead, low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more likely to consume processed foods, drink tap water, consume artificial sweeteners, invest in an unpredictable stock market, and accept medical advice from the nurse next door.

High uncertainty avoidance cultures are also more likely to spend time working on big ideas rather than on practical applications. This has been explained by the principle of verification, which asserts that any particular claim may be rendered true only when supported by multiple, externally valid, and replicated research. Verification is often impossible when working with grand concepts, or is often proven or disproved long after the theorist has finished her work. It should be no surprise, then, that high uncertainty avoidance cultures are also slow to adopt, experiment with, and take on new technologies.

Uncertainty Avoidance and Technology

An interesting aspect of uncertainty and technology is found in preferences for online navigation. Much of the existing literature on information architecture, organizational strategies, and navigation emphasizes a single concept—deliver a guided but flexible user experience. This doesn't mean a designer should provide a random and unstructured online environment, but it's close. But the problem with this nonlinearity is that it's often inappropriate for users from high uncertainty environments.

Online structure or information architecture is roughly divided into three types—linear, hierarchy, and hub and spoke. A linear structure is the kind of pattern users often expect in online learning environments. The goal with linear structures is to guide the user through a sequence of steps toward some goal, usually an exam. Hierarchies are the most common type of structure because it provides flexibility and growth for the site. Hub and spoke architectures are effective because options branch off a single node. Although hierarchies are the most common type of online architecture, they're not always the best solution for high uncertainty users.

It turns out the reason for this is rather simple. Users from high uncertainty cultures have less confidence in how things work, which readily translates to online navigation. A rich network of options is often a sign of anxiety and concern for the uncertain user, which conflicts with prevailing ideas about how best to structure online information. Instead, high uncertainty users prefer more constraints in their user experience since it reduces potential confusion.

One of the most popular uses of hub-and-spoke architecture is found in a similar online user experience—portable computing. Many cell phones, for instance, use hub-and-spoke structures for their menu options, usually with the goal of constraining navigation. Cell phones are used by people from every corner of the globe, which opens the door for a number of usability problems. But what many cell phone designers have figured out is that, thanks to a fairly small set of menu options, the navigational structure of cell phones is easily confined to the hub-and-spoke method. And hub-and-spoke structures just happen to be a fairly good approach for high uncertainty users in traditional online environments.

A number of well-known websites have experimented with hub-and-spoke structures, including the New York Times and National Geographic. But the best known and most extensive use of the hub-and-spoke architecture was used by the International Herald Tribune (IHT). The target user for IHT is truly international, and that means designing for a variety of

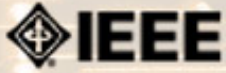
cultural and technical factors. IHT successfully used the hub-and-spoke structure for a number of years. But for unknown reasons, IHT has since discontinued this model, opting instead for the traditional hierarchy. This change may be partly explained by IHT's expansion and growing foothold in the market, which often results in delivering a more complex set of services and information.

Conclusion

Uncertainty is a strange and enigmatic feature of daily life. We may like to think that its effects are minimal, or at least confined to the most basic elements of human survival. But, there is new and surprising evidence that uncertainty has larger ramifications, regularly bleeding into science and technology. The power of the unknown is often extraordinary, and may even influence a simple online factor such as navigation.

Matthew McCool began his career doing research in neuroscience but left when he realized no one was able to explain how the mind worked. Since then, Matthew has been a programmer, technical writer, and online developer for a variety of IT firms. Some of this work was internationalized for customers in Europe and Asia. Matthew is a staff writer for the O'Reilly Network and teaches at Southern Polytechnic SU in Atlanta, GA.

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Write It Right

The Very Basics

by Judy Goldsmith and Robert H. Sloan

This is the first of a series of articles on technical writing. As computer science professors and professionals, we read a lot of other people's technical writing: student assignments and papers; drafts of theses and dissertations; workshop, conference, and journal submissions; grant proposals and white papers; and of course, emails from students and colleagues. We are also the sort of cranks who know that one of the uses of the semicolon is to punctuate a list where at least one member of the list contains an internal comma.

At least one of us has become a compulsive editor, finding typos and poor writing on cereal boxes and billboards as well as technical materials. Both of us wish that everyone else would learn how to write.

To that end, we wrote a rather lengthy article on technical writing. We learned, to our surprise, that not only are there some people who have not learned how to write, but there are quite a few technical journals and magazines that consider the topic of writing well outside of their scope.

Thus, we are offering a series of short articles so that the readers of IEEE Professional Communications Society Newsletter will avoid the standard errors we so often red-ink. We hope that, in the course of the articles, we can entertain and inform.

We begin our series with an article about the very basics: understanding your audience, organizing your writing, understanding the importance of grammar and spelling, understanding the revision process, and writing abstracts and summaries.

Audience

When you sit down to write about anything technical, your goal is to communicate with some person or group of people. To do this well, you need to know who your readers will be. What can you assume about their knowledge of the field? Do they know basic definitions and related work? Are they specialists in the area? Do they have theoretical or hands-on knowledge of the area? How broad a range in knowledge can you expect?

Once you know your audience, write for them, not yourself. Define all of your technical terms, unless you are sure they will know them. If you are not sure whether something is a technical term, try it out on the clerk in the supermarket, or some other non-computer scientist. Try it out on a computer scientist or programmer in a different field.

Organization

Your final document should be organized. For most writers, this means planning the organization ahead of time. By all means, start with brainstorming what should go into the paper, if that helps you. However, next you must put a structure on the ideas. Furthermore, you must make that structure evident to the reader by using named sections and giving a “road map” of the document somewhere early on. The most common place for such a road map to appear is at the end of the introduction section.

While that may seem trite, that is where your readers are likely to look for it. Do not disappoint them without a reason. (A typical reason to change would be if one were writing the odd paper where the first two sections are both introductory, as opposed to the more common case where the second section is either related work or formal notation.)

Organization extends to the paragraph and even sentence level. A sentence should contain one idea and one subject. Paragraphs should contain one topic. The first sentence of the paragraph should indicate that topic. Although most paragraphs should have three or more sentences, it is better to err on the side of short paragraphs occasionally.

Grammar and Spelling

Correct grammar and spelling help set an appropriate tone for your writing. Correct use of language indicates professional material, and eliminates many of ambiguities. However, you can not rely on your spellchecker, because of misspellings that are nevertheless correct words. There is a subtle difference, for instance, between the use of “ethics” and “ethic,” in writing about, say, safety-critical software development procedures, and a vast difference between “ethics” and “ethnics.” A formal tone is appropriate, though overly formal writing can be hard to read. Occasional humor can make a paper easier to read and more memorable, but humor at the expense of any group of people is never appropriate.

Importance of Revision

Just as a car shopper should not fall in love with a particular car until prices have been negotiated, you must not fall in love with your own words: Neither particular examples, nor phrases, nor technical names. Consider the case of the grad student who named her object of study “E.T.,” after Exponential Time. Unfortunately, her interview talks happened just after the movie *E.T.: The ExtraTerrestrial* came out.

Good technical writing is revised and revised and revised again. Once you think a paper is finished, you should read it once for correctness, once for consistency, and then once for grammar and spelling. If you are going to name something E.T., you do not want to refer to it as e.t. or ET or F.T.

Abstracts and Summaries

Almost all technical documents start with an abstract or summary and end with conclusions. Those should be written last, when you know what it is that you have written, rather than what you intend to write.

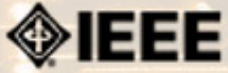
The abstract or summary should state the problem, very briefly describe the problem if the audience isn’t expected to be familiar with the problem, and state the solution that the paper offers. Know your readership, know what they can be expected to know about your subject. Write for your readers, not an ideal reader.

In the Next Installment

The next installment will introduce different forms of technical writing and the expectations that go with these forms. For each form of writing, we give the intended audience, the expected content, and the expected review process. In later installments, we will discuss the review process, the issue of coauthorship, the uses of other's research, some of our pet peeves on the mechanics of writing, and ways to present experimental work.

Judy Goldsmith is a computer science professor at the University of Kentucky. Her research interests include decision making under uncertainty; automation of information elicitation; preference elicitation, representation, and aggregation; computational learning theory, and structural complexity.

Robert H. Sloan is a professor (and acting department head) of computer science at the University of Illinois, Chicago. His research interests include application of computer science theory and algorithms to problems from artificial intelligence, especially machine learning ("computational learning theory") and knowledge representation; computer security, especially access control; and computer science education.



Newsletter



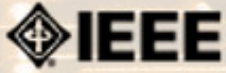
IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 8 • September 2007

President's Column

See you in Seattle at IPCC 2007!

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

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Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 8 • September 2007

Editor's Column

Mostly Housekeeping

by Kit brown

It's a busy fall in PCS world!

The website will be migrating to Drupal and a new URL on 1 October 2007. The unveiling will occur at IPCC. For now, the newsletter will continue as it has for the past 3 years. We are, however, working on a way to limit access to members only (so if you are a lurker, now is the time to sign up as a member!), and we will eventually be migrating to a new URL, which will be set up (as it is currently) so that you can bookmark the main page and always see the most current issue.

The survey I mentioned in the last newsletter is coming; the website changes and some issues with getting current member information have slowed it down, but we DO want to know what you think and what you would like to see.

Write It Right

Judy Goldsmith and Robert Sloan have serialized a paper of theirs on writing skills for technical professionals. They are computer science professors, and share their insights into writing effectively.

Book Reviews

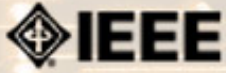
I have a several people who have expressed interest in writing book and website reviews. Now, I need books and websites to review. If you have written/heard of a book or produced/heard of a website on a topic related to technical communication, send me the bibliographic information and I will get someone to do a review.

Topics for Next Year

It is time to start brainstorming article ideas for next year. If you have something you want to know more about, or conversely, something you want to tell folks about, please let me know and we will get it on the schedule. I would love people to volunteer to write the feature articles on a topic that interests them and is related to technical communication! (One caveat, the newsletter emphasizes practical advice that the reader can use immediately in his/her work. Scholarly papers are better suited for the *Transactions*.)

Thank you, dear reader, for your time and interest! I hope that the newsletter continues to provide you with good information that helps you do your job more effectively.

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Book/Web Site Reviews

Editor's Note: Several IEEE members have written books of interest to PCS members. If you would like to have it reviewed by a newsletter volunteer, please contact Kit Brown at [pcsnews.editor AT ieee.org](mailto:pcsnews.editor@ieee.org).

Writing Resources

By Kit Brown

When I taught technical communication classes, I provided them with the following list of resources. The list is by no means exhaustive, and while I try periodically to test the links, I do not guarantee that they still work. If you find a dead link, please let me know via [email](mailto:). Alternatively, if you know of interesting links, please share them.

Links are listed by the following categories:

- [Reference](#)
- [Grammar](#)
- [Search Engines](#)
- [List Serves](#)
- [Tools](#)
- [Professional Organizations](#)
- [Books, Magazines, and E-zines](#)

Reference:

The following list provides information that helps technical communicators in their daily work, and includes URLs for online dictionaries, standards organizations, and style guides.

- **Merriam-Webster Dictionary:** <http://www.m-w.com/netdict.htm>
- **Online Dictionary:** <http://www.dictionary.com/>
- **Techwhirl:** <http://www.techwr-l.com/techwhirl/index.php3>. Contains lots of information about all aspects of technical communication.
- **Gil Gordon on Telecommuting:** <http://www.gilgordon.com/>. Resources for the telecommuter.
- **W3C:** <http://www.w3c.org>. The standards organization for all things web.



Grammar and Basic Writing

The following links provide resources on grammar and writing to help you improve your writing.

- **Jack Lynch's Guide to Grammar and Style:** <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/>. Provides a discussion of various dogmas about grammar and explanations of accepted usages, as well as links to other resources and information.
- **Mike Markel's web site for his textbook:** <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/techcomm/>. Use this site to understand the examples and concepts in the 7th edition of *Technical Communication*.
- **Online Grammar Guide:** <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/> Use this site to refresh your memory about the basic grammar terminology and rules.
- **Beehive:** <http://www.thebeehive.org/school/middle/subjects.asp?subject=12> Use this site to review the grammar rules and to do practice exercises.



Search Engines

Search engines help you locate information on the Internet by searching for sites with a particular keyword or subject. The newer the search engine, often the better it is at filtering out irrelevant data.

- **Google:** <http://www.google.com>
- **Ask.com:** <http://www.ask.com>
- **Lycos:** <http://www.lycos.com>
- **Altavista:** <http://www.altavista.com>
- **Yahoo!:** <http://www.yahoo.com>



List Serves

List serves are online discussion groups about topics that interest members of the list. These lists are of particular interest to technical communicators. One caveat though—these lists can generate a high volume of e-mail, so I highly recommend requesting the digest version.

- **Framers:** <http://www.frameusers.com/> >> choose E-mail lists from the menu. This is the premier list for folks who use Adobe Framemaker.
- **TECHWR-L:** <http://www.techwr-l.com/>. The premier list for technical communicators and a source of great information that ranges from tool issues to professional development. Eric gets very crabby when people don't stay on topic, so be sure to read the rules.
- **XML:** <http://groups.yahoo.com/messages/xml-doc/>



Tools

We use a variety of tools to do our jobs. These sites provide online tech support and FAQs.

- **Adobe:** <http://www.adobe.com>. Find out information about all Adobe products. There are tech support areas where you can research issues related to the products.
- **Frame:** <http://www.frameusers.com/>. This is a site that provides reference information about Frame and Frame training, bugs, etc. It is independent of Adobe. You can also subscribe to the Framers list from here.
- **Frame Plug-ins:** <http://www.kagi.com/SPSoftware/>. Steve Kubis' site for the indexing tool and others.
- **Webex:** <http://www.webex.com/home/default.htm>. A web meeting software application. You can set up the meeting so that you can access other meeting attendees' computers. This functionality is very useful for troubleshooting.
- **Microsoft products:** <http://www.microsoft.com/>. This site contains a plethora of information about MS products, tech support issues, goings on, and other stuff.



Professional Organizations

Professional organizations provide opportunities for networking and for learning skills that you may not get the opportunity to develop on the job. To get the most out of a volunteer organization, volunteer for a project or leadership role.

- **IEEE-PCS:** <http://www.ieeepcs.org>. This is the IEEE Professional Communication Society site.
- **LISA:** <http://www.lisa.unige.ch/>. This is the localization standards organization. They hold quarterly meetings, and often have good information that is directly relevant to us.
- **Society for Technical Communication (STC):** <http://www.stc.org/>. This is the biggest organization for technical communicators, and is very active in promoting the profession.
- **American Medical Writers Association (AMWA):** <http://www.amwa.org>. This professional society caters to technical communicators work work in the medical and biotechnology industries.



Books, Magazines, and E-zines

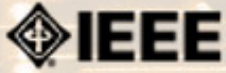
These sites provide useful or interesting information related to technical communication.

- **Writer's Digest:** <http://www.writersdigest.com>. Hints for writers. Some classes available.
- **Fast Company:** <http://www.fastcompany.com/homepage/>. Business info from a unique perspective. Very interesting articles that seem to capture trends.

- **Forbes:** <http://www.forbes.com/>. Business news
- **Inc.:** <http://www.inc.com/>. Focuses primarily on leadership and high-tech.



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Newsletter



IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter • ISSN 1539-3593 • Volume 51, Number 8 • September 2007

Tidbits

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

Internet Name Game

From LA Times, 29 August 2007

Despite the DotCom bust of a few years ago, new companies are popping up all the time, and they need unique names. But, names are getting scarcer. [Read more...](#)

Social Networking for Grownups

From Wall Street Journal, 28 August 2007

Business professionals are starting to jump on the social networking bandwagon to discuss job- or industry-specific issues with their peers. [Read more...](#)

Bone of Contention with Clichés

Contributed by Luke Maki (From Newsweek, 6 August 2007)

Gregory Pence, a bioethics professor at University of Alabama takes issue with students' inability to think outside the box with their writing. [Read more...](#)

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Job Announcements

Editor's Note: We have had several requests to post job openings. If you would like to post your opening, please send the job announcement in a Word document with minimal formatting to Kit at pcsnews.editor@ieee.org. The jobs will remain on the list until the closing date listed in the announcement.

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, University of Toronto **NEW!**

Editor-in-Chief,

IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication

IEEE Press **NEW!**

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in the Engineering Communication Program, U of Toronto

Organization:	University of Toronto
Position(s) Available:	Lecturer/Senior Lecturer
Type of Position:	Professor
Closing Date for Applications:	30 November 2007
Location:	University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario CANADA
Contact:	Professor D. Grant Allen, ecplecture AT ecf.utoronto.ca
URL:	http://www.engineering.utoronto.ca/site8.aspx

The Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering at the University of Toronto invites applications for the position of Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in the Engineering Communication Program (ECP). The program is a North American leader in integrating communication instruction into the Engineering Curriculum. The program involves a range of courses, workshops, and individual consultations (at a writing centre) to instruct and support engineering students in writing and oral presentation as part of their studies. The program's courses incorporate more than 1500 students across 15 courses in seven departments/divisions.

The University of Toronto offers opportunities for collaborative and interdisciplinary research and teaching, the excitement of working with a diverse student population, and actively encourages innovative scholarship. Toronto itself is one of the most multicultural places in the world and the safest city of its size in North America.

This position is a full-time academic appointment in the teaching stream and will be made at the rank of either Lecturer or Senior Lecturer. The Lecturer rank has an initial appointment of three years, which can be renewed for a further two years.

In the fifth year of service, Lecturers are reviewed for promotion to the rank of Senior Lecturer. Senior Lecturers hold continuing appointments at the University. Rank and salary will commensurate with qualifications and experience.

The successful applicant for the position of Lecturer/Senior Lecturer will be nominated to hold the appointment as Director of the ECP. This is a five-year term appointment, renewable. The combined appointment of Lecturer/Senior Lecturer and Director will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the program and its faculty, which includes five full-time and numerous part-time and sessional lecturers;
- Teaching two (2) courses per term for two (2) terms per year; and
- Working with engineering departments/divisions to develop an integrated communication curriculum that will enable students to develop their professional communication and critical thinking abilities.

The position requires an individual with a minimum of five years experience leading a program in Technical Communication; a strong commitment to and knowledge of engineering communication; and a PhD in the field of Technical Communication, Rhetoric, or related field (e.g., Second Language Education, Applied Linguistics, Professional Communication, English, or Education). Essential for this position are the ability to work in team-teaching contexts, a track record of teaching excellence, and the ability to identify and solve curriculum delivery challenges.

The Director will have expertise in some of the following:

- designing courses and programs
- teaching Second Language at the university level
- developing Writing in the Disciplines (WID) programs
- teaching engineering design
- innovating through instructional technology

The successful candidate will lead a team to develop and deliver an integrated communication program for undergraduate, and possibly graduate, engineering students. Specific courses or modules within courses may include the following:

- technical communication
- communication and design
- oral communication
- Engineering Strategies and Practice
- professional writing

The deadline for applications is **30 November 2007** or until the position is filled. The anticipated start date is **1 July 2008** or sooner if required. Please send a letter of application, a curriculum vitae, a teaching dossier (with sample publications, course outlines, evaluations, and teaching philosophy), and three letters of reference to:

Professor D. Grant Allen
Vice-Dean Undergraduate Studies
Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering
University of Toronto
35 St. George Street, Room 149
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A4

Electronic submissions are highly preferred and should be submitted to ecf.utoronto.ca.

All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and Permanent Residents will be given priority. The University of Toronto is strongly committed to diversity within its community. The University especially welcomes applications from visible minority group members, women, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, members of sexual minority groups, and others who may contribute to further diversification of ideas. The University is also responsive to the needs of dual career couples.

Editor-in-Chief, *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*

Organization:	IEEE-PCS
Position(s) Available:	Editor in Chief
Type of Position:	Management
Closing Date for Applications:	1 July 2007
Location:	N/A
Contact:	Helen Grady, Chair of Editorial Board for PCS grady_h(AT)mercer.edu
URL:	http://www.ieeepcs.org/

The IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS) is seeking applications from qualified individuals to become the next Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*. **The new EIC will begin his or her tenure on 1 January 2008** and will work with the current EIC for a period of six months to ensure a smooth transition. (A detailed transition plan is available on request.)

The *Transactions* is a refereed, archival journal published quarterly by PCS. Because it is a leading journal in the field of technical communication and is perhaps the most visible activity of PCS, we must maintain extremely high standards and comply with the policies of the IEEE.

Duties: The EIC is responsible for managing an editorial staff and producing the quarterly journal, for following IEEE and PCS publication policies and procedures, and for reporting to the PCS administrative committee (AdCom). The EIC serves as an ex-officio member of the AdCom and is expected to attend two face-to-face and one virtual (online) meeting annually, as well as periodically attending the IEEE Editors meeting each spring.

The EIC solicits submissions, coordinates peer reviews of manuscripts according to IEEE policy, and communicates publication decisions to authors. The EIC ensures that manuscripts accepted for publication are edited according to the *IEEE T-PC Style Guide* and that electronic and hardcopy text and artwork are prepared according to IEEE production standards and schedules. The EIC reviews both galley and page proofs for each issue prior to printing.

Editorial Staff: In managing the overall preparation and production of the journal, the EIC may delegate some activities to staff. Currently, the editorial staff includes (a) one Book Review Editor who solicits and edits reviews, (b) five Associate

Editors who solicit manuscripts and work with authors, (c) two Editorial Assistants who edit and coordinate pre-press text with authors, as well as correct galley and page proofs, and (d) 20 Review Board members who review three or four manuscripts annually.

Although all staff members are technically volunteers, the EIC manages an annual budget of \$25,000 that is used primarily to provide honoraria or travel reimbursement for the EIC and editorial staff.

Application Materials: Applicants should submit the following materials to Dr. Helen Grady, Dept. of Technical Communication, School of Engineering, Mercer University, 1400 Coleman Ave., Macon, GA, 31220 (or via e-mail to [grady_h\(AT\)mercercer.edu](mailto:grady_h(AT)mercercer.edu)).

1. Statement of interest
2. Statement of qualifications
3. Resume
4. Two letters of recommendation from individuals who are knowledgeable about the applicant's qualifications
5. Letter of support from the applicant's institution

Application Process: Applications are **due by 1 July 2007**. The EIC search committee will review them and recommend a candidate for EIC by 1 August 2007. The AdCom will review that candidate by 15 August 2007 and, upon approval, will extend an offer by 30 August.

IEEE Press Editor-in-Chief and IEEE Press Editorial Board Members

Organization:	IEEE Press
Position(s) Available:	Editor in Chief and Press Board Members
Type of Position:	Volunteer
Closing Date for Applications:	17 September 2007
Location:	N/A
Contact:	Lani Angso (L.angso AT ieee.org) Ken Moore, Director, IEEE Book & Information Services, at k.moore AT ieee.org
URL:	http://www.ieee.org/web/publications/books/index.html

IEEE Press is seeking nominations for qualified candidates who are willing to serve, if elected, on the IEEE Press Editorial Board, or as IEEE Press Editor-in-Chief. Members of the IEEE Press Editorial Board serve three-year terms, with a maximum of two terms, according to policy of the IEEE Publication Products and Services Board (PSPB). The term of the IEEE Press Editor-in-Chief is two years, with maximum service of two terms. The current terms of three board members and the Editor-in-Chief expire at the end of 2007.

IEEE Press Board Duties

The board meets at least once a year, and also meets as needed in teleconference. The board includes a minimum of seven members and a maximum of 13 members. The primary duty of board members is to provide technical and scientific expertise in the development of world-class, technical books.

Board members are asked to work on a continuing basis with the Editor-in-Chief and IEEE Press staff to perform the following tasks:

- recruit authors
- review their proposals
- assist in identifying technical reviewers of proposals and complete book manuscripts

Editor-in-Chief

The IEEE Press Editor-in-Chief chairs the IEEE Press Editorial Board and represents the board on PSPB.

About IEEE Press

Currently, IEEE Press operates under a strategic plan that calls for expansion of its publishing program, while emphasizing acquisition of technical books. IEEE Press publishes in the full range of IEEE technical fields of interest, and currently has series that concentrate in communications, electromagnetics, biomedical engineering, power engineering, microwave technology, microelectronics, and computational intelligence.

Nominating Process

Interested nominators should submit a biography of no more than two pages that demonstrates the candidate's interest and technical experience. Self-nomination is permitted.

Recommendations for candidates may be made by the current IEEE Press Editorial Board to the Nominations and Appointments Committee of PSPB. The N&A Committee reviews proposed candidates and may make its own recommendations to PSPB. Appointments are expected to be made at the 16 November 2007 PSPB meeting.

Nominations (with bios attached) are to be sent to Lani Angso ([Langso AT ieee.org](mailto:LAngso@ieee.org)) up until **midnight, 17 September 2007**. For additional information, please contact Ken Moore, Director, IEEE Book & Information Services, at [k.moore AT ieee.org](mailto:k.moore@ieee.org).

