
The ATTW Blueprint

Newsletter of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing

Vol. 2 Spring 2003



Sam Dragga, incoming ATTW president, has an ambitious agenda, including a declaration of technical writing principles and plans for international outreach.

New ATTW President has Big Plans for Recruitment and Dedicated Conventions

Special committees are key to four point program

By Sam Dragga, ATTW President

Next year ATTW will celebrate its 25th anniversary as a professional association. This milestone is a perfect time to review our accomplishments and to develop specific objectives for the next twenty-five years.

We have grown considerably and changed with the times and the profession, often leading the field. We now serve a membership of roughly 1000 teachers. We publish the award-winning *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and, in conjunction with Ablex Publishing, have initiated a new book series for teachers of technical communication. In addition, we operate an email discussion list and a web site.

We have a lot to celebrate. Sherry Little of San Diego State University and Beth Tableaux of Texas A&M University, both past presidents of ATTW, will chair the planning committee on the 25th anniversary. If you have suggestions, email Sherry (slittle@mail.sdsu.edu) or Beth (edt9933@acs.tamu.edu).

Despite our excellent record, four issues challenge us as we prepare for our next quarter-century.

First, I believe that ATTW should start holding an annual or biannual convention for technical communication teachers. If we wish to mature fully as a discipline and professional association, we need to establish a separate identity via a convention where

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Self-Promotion Work Helps Graduates

By Dr. Ann Jennings, University of Houston

Self-promotion is one of the great unspoken survival tactics of professional life. Honest self-promotion is both appropriate and expected in industry. Because of their writing, editing, and presentation skills, technical communication students are in a unique position to practice self-promotion effectively.

A series of classroom activities help students learn self-promotion. Advanced students will profit most from these activities, as they will have portfolio material and can apply information immediately during job interviews and early stages of their careers. These 11 steps introduce students to three forms of self-promotion: portfolios, job interviews, and networking.

THE PORTFOLIO

Step 1: Students assemble and bring to class assignments completed in technical writing classes or during internships. Students already working in industry can include samples done on the job. Samples can include varied business and technical material such as brochures, newsletters, presentation outlines and visual aids, procedures manuals, marketing letters, and news releases. Students with desktop publishing experience should include design samples. Reviewing their work will help students discuss it in interviews.

Step 2: Students create their own stationary suites, including letterhead, envelopes, business cards and even personal logos, and promotional brochures. This suite should be used when communicating with potential employers to distinguish students from competitors in the job market. Samples should be included in the students' presentation portfolios.

Step 3: Students purchase professional-quality portfolio cases and, in class, cull, organize, and mount their materials within. A table of contents can serve as the first entry.

THE JOB INTERVIEW

Step 4: Students write resumes that stress the
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Dragga's Four Point Plan

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the teaching of technical communications is the primary focus. Betsy Smith of Auburn University has been investigating the logistics of such a convention. If you have additional insights or opinions on this subject or would like to serve on the committee, please contact Betsy (smitheo@mail.auburn.edu).

Second, we need to work harder at recruiting and retaining members for ATTW, especially racial and ethnic minorities. Although the field of technical communication has been growing, ATTW membership has remained static for ten years. There are more and more teachers of technical communications who could benefit from ATTW membership, but most don't know we exist. A new standing committee to develop programs and strategies for expanding membership will be chaired by Jo Allen of East Carolina University. Jo is a founding editor of the ATTW Bulletin and conducted a membership survey in 1994. She probably nobody knows our membership better than anyone else. If you have ideas about recruitment or retention, please contact Jo Allen at her office email: (enallen@ecuvm.cis.ecu.edu).

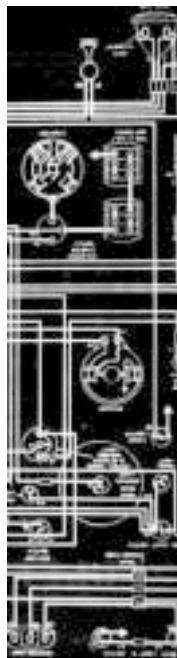
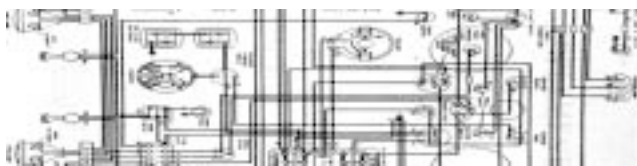
Third, because technical communication today is global communication, we need to establish ATTW as an international organization. A step in this direction will be taken in May when a delegation of technical communication teachers from the United States heads to the People's Republic of China. See the related article in this newsletter for details. I would like to see more international exchanges opportunities for us to practice international teaching and research. Vice-president-elect Steve Bernhardt will chair a special committee to investigate ways ATTW might better serve technical communications teachers internationally. Steve has a distinguished record in international consulting and brings considerable personal experience to this job. If you would like to serve on this special committee, please contact Steve (sbernar@nmsu.edu).

Fourth, ATTW deserves a clear declaration of principles to serve as professional guidelines for teachers of technical communication, especially new teachers. Paul Dombrowski of Ohio University will chair a special committee addressing the question: What are ethical practices in teaching, research, editorial review, and

corporate consulting? Paul is a prominent scholar on the subject of ethics and technical communication. If you would like to serve on this committee, please contact Paul at (dombrowski@ouvaxa.cats.ohiou.edu).

This is an aggressive but incomplete agenda. To suggest additional initiatives, please contact me (Dept. of English, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-3091; 806-742-2521 ditsd@ttacs.ttu.edu).

We didn't arrive at the prominent position we are in today by being timid about this profession or organization. We must build on the foundation laid in 1973 and move forward with determination and dedication to expand the value and role of the ATTW in the technical communication education arena. **Blueprint**



ATTW Meetings at CCCC

Ad Hoc Committee on Joint Conferences

OPEN meeting

Thursday, March 13, 6:45-7:30 p.m.

Civic plaza, Yuma Room 23

Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, Mrch 13, 7:45-9:45

Civic plaza, Yuma Room 23

ATTW Annual Meeting & Reception

Friday March, 14, Hyatt Regency

- Meeting, 6-7 p.m., Curtis Room A, 2nd Floor—Atrium Level
- Reception, 7-9 p.m., Borein Room B, 2^d Floor—Atrium Level



The ATTW newsletter redesign project was led by technical and marketing writer William Cracraft of Freelance News Service



ATIW members to visit the People's Republic of China

Citizen Ambassador Program of People-to-People International has invited a delegation of educators and professionals in technical writing and communications to visit the People's Republic of China in May 2003. Delegation members and their professional counterparts in China will discuss the growth of technical communication in the P.R.C. People-to-People is a private-citizen effort and delegates will be responsible for their own travel costs.

Following the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), access by China's professionals to international counterparts was limited by a lack of technical communication skills. The teaching of technical communication and the development of technical writing only emerged in the People's Republic of China in the late 1970s. Today, technical writing in the PRC focuses on technical journals, technical writing, and English for science and technology. Programs were initially developed as independent courses at technology-oriented colleges.

The delegation will meet in San Francisco and visit Beijing, Guilin, Shanghai, and Suzhou between May 3 and May 16. Delegation members will meet with technical communication faculty from universities, members of the China Association for Science and Technology, Association of Translators for Science and Technology, and the Chinese Associated Group of Technical Writers of Science, Engineering, Agricultural, and Medical Institutions.

Self promotion starts in school

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variety of projects they have completed.

Step 5: Students collect and bring to class advertisements for writing positions. As a group, the class examines qualifications required by the

advertisements as well as the range of industries offering positions. Students match potential positions to either their own personal portfolios and resumes or those of classmates.

Step 6: Instructors assure students that jobs are available for writers at every skill level. Many employers prefer to hire workers who demonstrate self-confidence, broad talent, and the ability to learn, rather than a detailed knowledge of an industry or product. Other employers insist that job candidates understand an industry thoroughly or have extensive prior experience with specific software and hardware.

Step 7: Students write one-page cover letters for specific positions. These letters demonstrate students' general level of writing skill and ability to write as tasked.

Step 8: Students rehearse for interviews for the jobs they identified in Step 5. Students can alternate roles in order to better understand the process. Presentation of portfolios during the mock interviews aid self-confidence by permitting students to practice talking about themselves, an important quality for successful self-promotion.

NETWORKING

Step 9: Instructors introduce networking, emphasizing that professionals they meet may one day be interviewing them. Instructors can arrange for students to attend the meetings of professional organizations or invite members of the organizations to speak on campus. Organizations include the Society for Technical Communication, Public Relations Society of America, International Association of Business Communicators, and more.

Step 10: Instructors provide advice on finding mentors in the work place. Mentors teach new employees how to network within the corporation, which is a form of continuing self-promotion.

Step 11: Instructors identify mentors to work with recent graduates until the new writers identify on-the-job mentors. Alumni of technical writing programs, members of professional societies, and other faculty are great resources for students.

CONCLUSION

This process will help develop well-informed, confident students who understand how to promote themselves in the marketplace. Technical communicators who present their achievements imaginatively will build rewarding careers. **Blueprint**

Call for Proposals by Society for Text and Discourse

The Society for Text and Discourse is seeking proposals for posters and papers to be presented at its annual meeting, which will be held July 10 and 11, 1997, at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. This year special interest will be paid to proposals concerning the translation of empirical research findings into areas of application, such as text and document design, learning from texts and problem-solving, mass communication and new media. Other proposals on topics within the realm of the text and discourse community are also welcome. The Society for Text and Discourse is an international society of researchers who investigate all aspects of discourse processing and text analysis. The purpose of the Society is to consolidate research in discourse processing and to enhance communication among researchers in different disciplines. The deadline for receiving proposals is March 7, 2003. Acceptance notification will be made before April 18. Research must be completed at the time the proposal is submitted. For more information or a registration form, contact Mascha Damen, Centre for Language and Communication, Utrecht University, Trans 10, 3512 JK Utrecht, The Netherlands, email mascha.damen@let.ruu.nl.

Places on the Web

<http://english.ttu.edu/attw/syllabi/syl.html>

The ATTW Syllabi and Teaching Materials Site is a place to share teaching materials used in university level technical communication classrooms. The ATTW syllabi site includes 22 syllabi in eight of its 15 categories, which include communication theory, internet issues and online documentation.

<http://www.missouri.edu/~cccc/97/>

The online home of the 48th Annual CCCC convention, this site includes registration information, a forum for participants, local information about Phoenix and more.

<http://www.ncte.org/resources/web.html>

The National Council of Teachers of English hosts this site, with links to a broad list of sites and educational databases on language learning and literacy, intellectual property issues, and more.

<http://cisw.cla.umn.edu/WritingLabs/Teaching/Index.html>

Wonderful site with links to and reviews of web sites for teachers and researchers of English provided by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing at the University of Minnesota.

<http://www.netlink.co.uk:80/users/emwa/>

This is the homepage of the European Medical Writers Association, the European Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA). Provides links to the web site.

The ATTW

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