COMMUNICATION &LANGUAGE at work
Issue no. 2 | January, 2013
Technical Communication

Educating Technical Communication Teachers: The Origins, Development, and Present Status of the Course, "Teaching Technical Writing" at Illinois State University

Gerald Savage

(pp. 3-19)

http://ojs.statsbiblioteket.dk/index.php/claw/article/view/7896

Educating Technical Communication Teachers

The Origins, Development, and Present Status of the Course, "Teaching Technical Writing" at Illinois State University

Gerald Savage
Professor Emeritus
Illinois State University

Abstract

Since the early 1980s, Illinois State University's English Department has educated numerous technical communication practitioners as well as dozens of teachers of technical communication throughout the United States. Today, the program's faculty members are nationally recognized for their contributions to scholarship and education and its Ph.D. and M.A. students are sought after to teach in the technical communication programs of other universities. A critical component of this success was the development of the graduate course, Teaching Technical Writing in 1990. This essay situates the development of that course in the history not only of the technical communication program at Illinois State University but in the history of the technical communication field, particularly since 1950. Although the essay focuses on one course in one midsized, Midwestern U.S. University, it is, I believe, exemplary of the development and current status of technical communication pedagogy throughout the U.S.

The introductory course in technical communication has been part of the service responsibility of the English Department at Illinois State University for almost forty years. It has been in great demand throughout those years for technology students, filling multiple classes every semester. The program has expanded in that time from a single, introductory course to undergraduate and graduage programs that continue to serve other departments and schools in the university while also providing a range of courses for English majors preparing for careers as professional communicators, editors, and publishing professionals. It has expanded from an undergraduate course to a Masters in Professional Writing and Rhetorics, and to a focus for doctoral studies.

In 1990, the course, "Teaching Technical Writing," was added to the English Department's graduate curriculum. The course had two purposes: 1. to prepare graduate teaching assistants to teach the department's introductory technical communication course, "Technical Writing I", for which student demand always exceeded the availability of faculty to teach it; and, 2. to strengthen the professional credentials of master's and doctoral degree students preparing for academic careers.

The four tenure-track faculty members who specialize in technical communication have numerous other teaching commitments, including nine other technical communication courses as well as courses in other curricular areas. Frequently, some of these faculty members also have administrative assignments or other duties that limit their availability to teach. Thus, it is impossible for tenure-track faculty to meet the entire demand for "Technical Writing I". For this reason alone, the technical communication pedagogy course has been a vital part of the curriculum.

Graduate teaching assistants in the English Department typically teach required introductory courses in composition and literature, which are considered their primary teaching commitment. With 58 sections of composition offered in the spring 2013 semester, little flexibility in graduate student teaching assignments is possible. However, the department has for many years recognized the importance of providing graduate students opportunities to teach other courses relating to their areas of specialization. Thus, three or four graduate teaching assistants who have completed "Teaching Technical Writing" are assigned to teach "Technical Writing I" each year.

It is likely, today, that most doctoral graduates of technical and professional communication programs have had at least one course in technical communication pedagogy and opportunities to teach an introductory course prior to graduation. This has, of course, not always been the case. Technical communication was taught for well over half of the 20th century without a well-developed pedagogical foundation. Therefore, it is useful to situate this examination of Illinois State University's "Teaching Technical Writing" course within the historical context of U.S. technical communication pedagogy .

The Origins of Technical Communication Pedagogical Research

Professional Organizations and Professional Journals

Technical communication pedagogy has been an area of extensive research for many years. Two technical communication professional organizations were formed with the mission to advance technical communication education. The Association of Teachers of Technical Communication was organized in 1973. Its constitution lists the following purposes:

- Provide support for the academic discipline of technical writing/technical communication;
- Provide means of communication between teachers of technical writing/technical communication at the national and international levels;

- Disseminate information on the discipline of technical writing/technical communication to both the greater academic community and to the public at large.
- Provide liaison with other scholarly and professional organizations to foster exchange of ideas and provide additional support to the discipline and profession;
- Provide timely announcement of meetings, workshops, and other activities related to the advancement of the profession and discipline;
- Provide up-to-date annual bibliographies and information files on matters pertinent to the membership;
- Encourage, sponsor, and report research on the teaching of technical writing/technical communication;
- Produce, publish, and distribute to members the organization's official journal.

("ATTW Constitution")

The Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication was formed in 1974 with the following goals:

- Promote programs in technical and scientific communication
- Promote research in technical and scientific communication
- Develop opportunities for the exchange of ideas and information concerning programs, research, and career opportunities
- Assist in the development and evaluation of new programs in technical and scientific communication, if requested
- Promote exchange of information between this organization and interested parties
- ("Constitution of the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication,")

Both organizations have held annual meetings for most of their existence. ATTW has published a journal since 1974 (*The Technical Writing Teacher* from 1974-91 and *Technical Communication Quarterly* from 1993 to the present). CPTSC only recently started its online journal, *Programmatic Perspectives,* however it has published proceedings from its annual conferences since 1974. A few other professional journals for technical communication had also been established. *The Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* began publication in 1971; *The Journal of Business and Technical Communication* was launched in 1987. The oldest journal in the field, *Technical Communication*, published by the Society for Technical Communication, first appeared in 1954 (Hayhoe, 2007). Each of these journals has published numerous articles concerning teaching and curriculum. However, even earlier, the journal *College Composition and Communication*, a publication of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, was publishing occasional articles on the teaching of technical writing. The journal's first article on technical writing appeared in *College Composition and Communication* in 1950, the year the journal was first published (Bowman, 1950).

Textbooks and Pedagogical Texts

Of course, textbooks for technical communication courses have been published for over a century (Kynell, 1996), and certainly many hapless teachers who have been compelled to teach unfamiliar subject matter for the first time have relied on a textbook to help them design and deliver the course, sometimes desperately reading just one chapter ahead of the students. Indeed, for many years prior to the field's coalescing into something like an academic discipline, the few textbooks that existed may well have been the most authoritative scholarly literature available for teachers to learn the pedagogy of the field. Nevertheless, it seems valid to say that in mature disciplines, the textbooks follow the published research rather than lead it, and that includes both the research on subject matter and on pedagogy.

The first book on technical communication pedagogy may have been *The Teaching of Technical Writing*, edited by Donald H. Cunningham and Herman A. Estrin, published in 1975. This was a collection of 24 articles, which were gleaned from other books and from conference papers dating from as early as 1960. It was followed two years later by *Technical and Professional Communication: Teaching in the Two-Year College, Four-Year College, Professional School*, edited by Thomas M. Sawyer. All of the essays in the collection appear to have been written no earlier than 1976 with most of them presented originally as conference papers. Clearly, pedagogical scholarship was being published by technical communication teachers and being talked about in professional conferences considerably prior to the publication of this book. Apparently the professional journals and conferences of the writing disciplines were not the only venues for published scholarship on technical communication. As Sawyer writes, "Scarcely a month goes by without an article appearing in one of the professional journals in engineering or science urging that more attention be given to technical writing" (Sawyer, 1977, p. 1).

It is significant that prior to the publication of these books and the emergence of technical communication as an academic discipline, most of the pedagogical scholarship concerning technical writing was published in engineering journals and presented at engineering conferences. This fact is further verified in several histories of U.S. technical writing, particularly Robert Connors "The rise of technical writing instruction in America" (Connors, 1982) and Teresa Kynell's *Writing in a Milieu of Utility: The Move to Technical Communication in American Engineering Programs 1850-1950*. These studies examine the development of technical writing pedagogy as a direct response to the growth of engineering programs in U.S. universities, which were, in turn, responding to the rapid expansion of the American industrial revolution.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, engineering educators were recognizing that the standard university courses in literature and writing were not only inadequate but in some ways irrelevant in preparing engineering students for the communication demands of their profession. This was not a challenge that most engineering instructors were able or willing to address on their own. Although a few professors did undertake the task of teaching the genres and styles commonly used in engineering writing, it was primarily regarded as the responsibility of English Departments. Over the next fifty years, a small but increasing number of English teachers took up this challenge, despite a considerable stigma of "vocationalism," which was frequently (and in some institutions continues today) attached to the idea of writing instruction specific to the contexts and purposes of the technical workplace. These teachers published articles, mainly in engineering journals, attended engineering conferences, gradually forming their own professional community, and a few of them wrote technical writing textbooks.

It required the urgent technological demands of World War II, however, for technical writing to begin to emerge as a distinct field of practice and as an academic discipline. Connors and Kynell both set 1950 as the starting point for technical communication's development as a profession. For several more decades, technical writers tended to be people—mostly men—with educational backgrounds as engineers or technicians and often who had an aptitude for technical writing, even as technical writing teachers were primarily people with advanced degrees in English literature. Although no precise information is available, it is likely this situation did not significantly change until the composition discipline emerged, beginning around the 1970s, although its leading professional organization, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), was formed in 1949. Today, the composition field is populated primarily by university level teachers of academic writing, i.e., the kind of writing taught in the first year of university undergraduate courses. During its first two or three decades, CCCC membership was almost entirely people who were trained as literary scholars but who found themselves teaching writing courses as much or more than they taught literature. However, few universities offered graduate degrees in composition until the late 1970s or early 1980s. Indeed, I began my graduate study in 1989 in a humanities department that had just formed a doctoral program that would be primarily focused on preparing scholars in composition and technical communication. Most of the faculty at that time, including the youngest of them, had earned M.A. or Ph.D degrees in literature. Many of those scholars are still active today. However, nearly all of them had become writing scholars specializing either in composition studies or technical communication. Although the first U.S. graduate program in technical communication was developed in the 1950s at Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute, few doctoral degrees in technical communication were awarded until the 1980s. Very few technical communication doctoral students were taught by scholars with technical communication doctoral degrees until the 1990s.

Illinois State University's Graduate Course, "Teaching Technical Writing"

It was in this historical context that the Illinois State University course was designed to prepare graduate students as teachers of technical communication. The course was designed by Russell Rutter, a scholar of 17th century British Literature. Professor Rutter had worked as a technical writer as a young man and, probably because of that experience and interest had been asked to teach technical writing in some of his first faculty positions. He and other instructors in the English Department had been teaching technical writing at Illinois State since 1974. By 1989 they had established a modest but quite effective technical writing program that served not only English majors interested in gaining specialized writing skills but also students from other disciplines, especially those in the School of Technology. Moreover, graduate students majoring in composition and rhetoric had been taking two more recently developed courses, "Technical Writing II" (an advanced course) and "Topics in Technical Writing", a graduate-level course offered every two years, addressing a different topic each time it was offered.

Rutter relates in a department document that in 1988, "Professor Edward P. J. Corbett, a nationally known rhetoric and composition scholar who teaches at the Ohio State University, visited Illinois State's Department of English as a guest speaker. In a round-table discussion with composition faculty, he observed that one of the best ways to improve the graduate writing program in English would be to implement a course in the teaching of technical writing" (Rutter, 1989, p. 2).

In fact, at least a year prior to Corbett's 1989 visit, Rutter had begun attempting to develop such a course but had been unable to interest enough department faculty to win support for a formal course proposal. Because of Corbett's national stature, however, Rutter was able to get the course approved a year later, in 1990.

The Rationale for a Course in Teaching Technical Writing

According to Professor Jan Neuleib, a teacher of rhetoric and composition who had been on the Illinois State faculty in 1989,

> *part of the impetus for the course came from graduate students. We brought people in by the offer of a doctorate that would give them credentials different from the traditional Ph.D. Then when they got here, most of the courses were in literature; we had very few [courses] at the graduate level in writing except for the [doctoral] seminars in writing and teaching. Especially in tech writing, we had very little at all. So we began to brainstorm courses that would provide for the student needs and also have legitimate offerings to schools who would hire our doctoral students. (Neuleib, 2012)*

There were really two strong arguments for offering the technical communication pedagogy course. As both Rutter and Neuleib indicate, it was a valuable course for graduate students in the writing and rhetoric field. First, technical communication courses and programs were increasingly being offered in U.S. colleges and universities and the demand was growing for instructors who could teach in them. Second, the demand from other disciplines for technical writing courses was greater than the available teachers could meet.

The argument of nationwide demand

Illinois State University was founded in the 19th century as a "normal" school, that is, a school dedicated to the training of public school teachers. As such, it was well positioned to meet the growing demand for technical writing teachers across the U.S. Although it had dropped its normal-school designation in the 1960s to become a comprehensive university in name as well as in fact, it remained the leading teacher education institution in Illinois and continues that reputation today. Thus, the culture of the Department of English has always been equally committed to research and pedagogy. Indeed, pedagogical research has been strongly supported in the department. As Rutter wrote in the course proposal, "The proposed course will help the Department of English more precisely fulfill the mission of the university. It will add to the graduate program in English formal instruction in the teaching of technical writing, one of the fastest growing areas in college and university departments of English nationwide" (pp. 1-2).

Even at the time the course was proposed, a number of graduates of the doctoral program had focused their studies in technical communication and had found faculty positions in such U.S. universities as University of North Carolina, Purdue University, and Missouri State University. However, as other university programs in technical communication were growing they became more competitive for the best students and teachers. Rutter mentions some of the best universities in the nation as having similar programs at the time: Ohio State, Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the Universities of Minnesota, Indiana, Michigan, Colorado, and Texas (3). Today, there are well over 200 U.S. technical communication programs and the number continues to increase. Doctoral programs at present are barely meeting the need for new teachers in these programs. But this relates to the second argument for the pedagogy course.

The argument for more courses and more teachers in technical communication

Until the late 1990s the introductory technical writing course at Illinois State was open to all students in the university. In fact, the course has been required for undergraduate technology students for several decades. The School of Information Technology encompasses three majors, each of them quite a large program. Consequently, the

demand for the technical writing course has always exceeded the English Department's classroom space and instructional staff time. It was common for many years to hire part-time instructors to teach the course but even with sufficient part-time help, we were unable to meet the need. Computer classrooms have been essential for this type of course since the 1980s, but they have also been used for other writing courses during the same years. Such classrooms are, of course, very costly to equip and maintain and so expanding the number of "wired" classrooms could not happen quickly. Although part-time adjunct instructors were not difficult to find, there was some disadvantage in hiring them. They were likely to move to better paying or full-time jobs, their teaching credentials were sometimes less satisfactory than those of professors hired by means of the tenure-track hiring process which could attract highly qualified candidates from throughout the nation and world. Thus, part-time instructors' teaching experience, education, and aptitude for the academic workplace tend to vary widely, perhaps more in technical writing than for other areas of English Studies.

The obvious solution, which has been employed in universities for untold years, was to offer additional sections of the introductory technical writing course and to assign them to graduate teaching assistants. The advantages were numerous—graduate students' salaries are lower than for adjunct instructors, they can usually be counted on to be available for at least two years, they are familiar with and well adapted to the academic setting, and they are genuinely interested in teaching. Even though they often start with less education in the field and with no teaching experience, they receive their graduate education in the department in which they are also going to teach, which means the program has a great deal of control over the nature and quality of these instructors' education. This brings greater consistency with departmental curricular and pedagogical philosophy to their teaching.

The only difficulty for some years prior to 1990 was that no course was available for preparing graduate students in the arts of teaching technical writing. Training in the teaching of college writing was not enough. The differences in teaching college writing and technical writing are probably quite obvious. Introductory composition courses are intended to teach academic styles and genres of writing as preparation for the writing students will do for the rest of their college experience. These courses also commonly teach the roles of writing in civic contexts outside of the academy.

Technical communication courses address the needs of students in engineering, science, and technology disciplines for the specialized writing they will have to do in their professional workplaces. Early courses and textbooks focused primarily upon stylistic conventions and static genres—reports, proposals, procedures, and correspondence. Today, these topics are complicated by our awareness of the complex and dynamic nature of audiences, the literacy practices involved in the development and use of technologies and in the organizations and communities of which these practices are part. We have to address the social, legal, ethical, and economic effects of technical

communication texts and practices. Indeed, in the U.S. and possibly elsewhere, user documentation has been legally defined as part of the technology it accompanies (H. T. Smith & Shirk, 1996). As we have come to recognize that technologies are not simply discrete objects but systems, often environments, and are never value-neutral but always culturally saturated, we must prepare teachers to help future technical communicators to represent the technologies they write about in ways that reveal these complexities (Feenberg, 1999; Hannah, 2011; Lipus, 2006; Salisbury, 2012; Sauer, 2003).

Technical communication pedagogy is challenged further as its student audience has broadened. For more than half of the 20th century, most students in technical writing courses were preparing for careers in scientific or technical professions. The course was intended to prepare them for the writing they would do as part of their work as engineers, biologists, surgeons, and the like. However, after World War II, as Connors' and Kynell's research has revealed, technical communication began to emerge as a professional field in its own right. Although even today, as I and some others have argued, the field may not be a mature profession, competent practice as a technical communicator requires considerably more than a basic aptitude as a writer. It requires training specifically in technical communication but also in visual communication, document/web/multimedia design, project management, content management, usability and user-centered design, and activity theory, to mention only what are currently among the most widely taught topics. Even for teachers of introductory courses, pedagogical training specific to technical communication has become essential.

In our program at Illinois State, we made the decision to set aside at least one section of "Technical Writing I" each semester for English majors interested in professional writing careers. This was needed simply to assure them of seats in the course because of the overflow demand from Information Technology students. However, we were also concerned that the course as taught for technology students was not designed as an introduction to the field of technical communication and therefore did not meet the needs of aspiring professional technical communicators. Preparing teachers for the different pedagogies called for by these differences in course design is yet another reason for the pedagogy course.

"Teaching Technical Writing" has been taught in alternate years since 1990 by three faculty members: Russell Rutter, James Kalmbach, and me. I taught it five times between 1998 and 2011. The course changed and evolved, reflecting each instructor's perspectives on technical communication and pedagogy but also reflecting the evolution of the field. In an e-mail message to me recently, Kalmbach observes,

> *Looking at the proposal, you can see very clearly that it reflected [Rutter's] interests in how technical writing emerged out of traditional humanistic literary study and out of his experiences working with the Department of Technology in shaping our original technical writing courses. I suspect his course was shaped*

> *in large part by his long career teaching technical writing service courses both here and at Iowa State. When I taught the course in 1996, my interest was in genre knowledge and activity theory (though I didn't call it that). I was and still am interested in the ways in which writing is used to take action in the world. My teaching of the course was most shaped by my [previous] work at Michigan Tech in a program that had a technical writing major and a large number of undergraduate students.*
>
> *I do not know how you would characterize your teaching of the course, probably an emphasis on social justice and global issues emerging [from] your experiences as a graduate student in a newly formed program. (Kalmbach, 2012)*

I had arrived at Michigan Technological University as a graduate student one year after Kalmbach left his faculty position there for his position at Illinois State. By the time I graduated in 1994, as Kalmbach notes, I was greatly interested in the implications of social justice for technical communication. This interest was heightened by the growing practice of technical communication across national and cultural boundaries. I was beginning to think about the new perspectives needed for understanding technical communication's role in the processes of globalization and so I began talking with colleagues and students about the relevance of cultural studies and postcolonial theory for our field. Social justice perspectives were already emerging in the work of a number of other scholars in the field in the 1990s and I introduced my pedagogy students to that work as well as my own each time I taught the course. Examples of such work include (Katz, 1992), (Sullivan, 1990), (Savage, 1996), (Slack, Miller, & Doak, 1993), (Savage, 2004), (Brasseur, 1993), (Porter, 1993), (Munshi & McKie, 2001), (Hunsinger, 2006), (Irani, Vertesi, Dourish, Philip, & Grinter, 2010), (Palmeri, 2006), (Sun, 2006), (Watson, Yirrkala, & Chambers, 1989, 2008), (Johnson, Pimentel, & Pimentel, 2008).

There are continuities between Rutter's approach to the pedagogy course and my own, however. We both believe it important to situate technical communication theory, pedagogy, and practice culturally and historically. Therefore we both included units on the history of the field and of teaching practices at the beginning of the course. Rutter used Connors essay, still regularly cited thirty years after it was published. By the time I began teaching, we also had Kynell's more comprehensive book, which is now a standard reference for historical work in technical communication.

Rutter and I also believed it important to help students enter the community of technical communication teachers. Therefore, a requirement of the course was to work with an assigned mentor-teacher either in our own department or teachers in other nearby universities or colleges. This assignment included interviewing their mentor and observing her classroom teaching. If the mentor was willing, the students were also advised to develop a lesson and teach it in the mentor's classroom, an option the

mentors usually agreed to. These mentor relationships commonly continued long after the course ended. Relating to their work with mentors was the requirement to develop a syllabus for an introductory technical communication course with rationales and expected outcomes for all assignments and for the overall structure of their course design.

Selecting textbooks for a new course, especially in an area one is not very familiar with is frequently a challenge. Therefore, I required students to write a review of a textbook, an assignment I eventually expanded to two textbooks so they could compare them. I keep a large collection of current examination copies of textbooks and loan these to the students for the review assignment. Almost inevitably, of course, they would use a book they had reviewed as a text in the first technical writing course they taught after completing my pedagogy course.

Rutter and I share the conviction that our pedagogy students should understand how the courses they will teach fit into the curriculum of the whole department and even the institution as a whole. Therefore, students are assigned readings about program review and teaching assessment and they examine administrative documents such as course proposals so they can understand the kind of arguments that must be made in order to add a new course to a curriculum. They are asked to examine issues of educational program design and administration to help them understand the institutional, disciplinary, and even state-level dynamics and structural relationships in which all courses and teachers function and are sustained. For example, Rutter and I asked students to interview faculty in the disciplines whose students enrolled in our courses. I have also invited faculty from other disciplines and faculty from other areas of our own department to meet with my class and discuss ways that technical communication does, or might, relate to their fields. Such conversations are surprisingly difficult for the pedagogy students, who usually do not venture beyond the familiar boundaries of the department in which they are studying.

Finally, the course is interwoven with practical information about the design of assignments, classroom activities, and other pedagogical methods. They learn these from their mentor interviews, classroom observations, and textbook reviews, but we also assign articles on pedagogical methods and teaching tips. As mentioned above, a number of books on the teaching of technical communication are now available. New studies and method reports are regularly published in all of the leading journals in the field as well. Some recent pedagogical textbooks we have used in our program include: (Bridgeford, Kitalong, & Selfe, 2004; Dubinsky, 2004; Staples & Ornatowski, 1997), (Selfe, 2007), (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008).

The Future of Technical Communication Pedagogy

That the field of technical communication is expanding and changing exponentially is surely apparent to everyone. The challenges such rapid changes pose for teachers, and

for the teachers of teachers, are taken seriously, as one of the topics of this special issue of *Communication and Language at Work* confirms. All of our professional organizations are supporting pedagogical and programmatic research and publications and the quality of that work is growing year by year. Nevertheless, there remain areas for further work. We need far more collaborative studies across national and cultural borders and to develop innovative international and intercultural teaching collaborations. Excellent work of this kind has been and continues to be done. Studies by scholars such as Bruce Maylath, TyAnne Herrington, David Alan Sapp, and Doreen Starke-Meyerring are exemplary (Maylath, et al., 2013);(Sapp, 2004, 2007), (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008), (Herrington, 2010).

Only beginning to be addressed are the relationships of race and ethnicity to technical communication. The few examples of such work include (Haas, 2012); (Banks, 2006); (Johnson, et al., 2008); (Williams, 2010); (Savage, 2011; Savage & Mattson, 2011). Angela Haas is one of our colleagues at Illinois State and her essay provides a detailed overview of effective ways of helping students to understand ways that technical communication, race, and ethnicity intersect. Her article will be an excellent source for technical communication pedagogy courses.

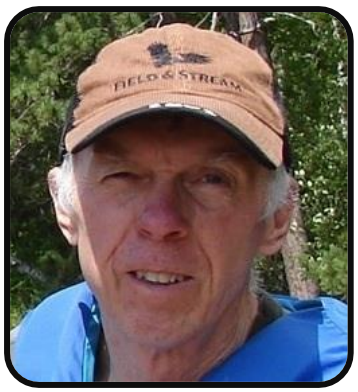
Finally, almost entirely neglected so far are studies of the implications and role of technical communication in the contexts of those parts of the world referred to variously as the third world, developing nations, the Global South, or—a term some scholars prefer—disenfranchised and unenfranchised communities. The only published work I am aware of so far are studies by Crabtree and Sapp and by Quarshie Smith (Crabtree, 1998; Crabtree & Sapp, 2005); (Sapp, 2004, 2007); (B. Q. Smith, 2012). However, *Technical Communication Quarterly* will publish a special issue for Winter 2013 titled *New Developments in Intercultural Professional Communication*, which will include two essays focusing on developing nations. The *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication and Globalization* is preparing a special issue titled *Human Rights and Professional Communication* for late 2013, with several of the proposed studies relating to developing nations and unenfranchised communities or groups.

The topics that have concerned technical communicators from the earliest days of the profession are unlikely to disappear from our courses and new teachers will need to understand them. But the old topics become new as the field reinvents itself and moves into new contexts of practice and as technologies themselves are transformed, and also transform human societies and the natural world. The work of technical communication teachers is more important and more difficult than ever and the programs that train them face sobering but also exciting challenges.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to colleagues James Kalmbach, Jan Neuleib, and Russell Rutter for their assistance in this project. Kalmbach devoted considerable time in locating archived documents, while Neuleib's phenomenal memory of English Department people, events, and politics considerably enriched this work. A lengthy phone conversation with Rutter helped me in understanding the historical context of the pedagogy course and in asking the right questions, which in turn helped Kalmbach go to the right places for the materials he located. I am even more in debt to them for their collegiality, mentoring, and friendship throughout my years at Illinois State University.

Author



Gerald Savage

Professor Emeritus, Illinois State University

Gerald Savage taught technical communication and rhetoric at Illinois State University until his retirement in January 2012. He is co-editor with Dale Sullivan of *Writing a Professional Life: Stories of Technical Communicators On and Off the Job*; with Teresa Kynell-Hunt he co-edited *Power and Legitimacy in Technical Communication Volumes I and II*. He is co-editor with Han Yu of *Negotiating Cultural Encounters: Narrating Intercultural Engineering and Technical Communication*, forthcoming in 2013. He is co-editor with Huiling Ding of *New Directions in Intercultural Professional Communication*, a special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly*. He has published numerous articles and book chapters concerning technical communication. His current research focuses on issues of social justice and diversity in technical communication. He is a Fellow of the Association of Teachers of Technical Communication, has received the Society for Technical Communication's Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Technical Communication, and the Distinguished Service Award of the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication.

Contact:
gjsavage@ilstu.edu

Works Cited

ATTW Constitution. Retrieved November 30, 2012 from http://www.attw.org/?q=node/106

Banks, Adam J. (2006). *Race, rhetoric, and technology: Searching for higher ground*. Mahwah, NJ and Urbana, IL: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates and NCTE.

Bowman, John S. (1950). A program for improving the writing skill of technical students. *College Composition and Communication, 1*(4), 7-10.

Brasseur, Lee E. (1993). Contesting the objectivist paradigm: Gender issues in the technical and professional communication curriculum. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 36*(3), 114-123.

Bridgeford, Tracy, Kitalong, Karla Saari, & Selfe, Dickie (Eds.). (2004). *Innovative approaches to teaching technical communication*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP.

Connors, Robert J. (1982). The rise of technical writing instruction in America. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 12*(4), 329-352.

Constitution of the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication. Retrieved November 30, 2012, from http://www.cptsc.org/constitution.pdf

Crabtree, Robbin D. (1998). Mutual empowerment in cross-cultural participatory development and service learning: Lessons in communication and social justice from projects in El Salvador and Nicaragua. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 26*, 182-209.

Crabtree, Robbin D., & Sapp, David Alan (2005). Technical communication, participatory action research, and global civic engagement: A teaching, research, and social action collaboration in Kenya. *Reflections: A Journal of Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy, 4*(2), 9-33.

Dubinsky, James M. (Ed.). (2004). *Teaching technical communication: Critical issues for the classroom*. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Feenberg, Andrew (1999). *Questioning technology*. New York: Routledge.

Haas, Angela M. (2012). Race, rhetoric, and technology: A case study of decolonial technical communication theory, methodology, and pedagogy. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 26*(3), 277-310.

Hannah, Mark A. (2011). Legal literacy: Coproducing the law in technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 20*(1), 5-24.

Hayhoe, George F. (2007). Why should STC publish a journal? *Technical Communication, 54*(1), 9-10.

Herrington, Tyanna K. (2010). Crossing global boundaries: Beyond intercultural communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 24*(4), 516-539.

Hunsinger, R. Peter (2006). Culture and cultural identity in intercultural technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 15*(1), 31-48.

Irani, Lilly, Vertesi, Janet, Dourish, Paul, Philip, Kavita, & Grinter, Rebecca E. (2010). *Postcolonial computing: A lens on design and development.* Paper presented at the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Atlanta, GA.

Johnson, Jennifer Ramirez, Pimentel, Octavio, & Pimentel, Charise (2008). Writing New Mexico White: A critical analysis of early representations of New Mexico in technical writing. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 22*(2), 211-236.

Kalmbach, James (November 2012). The history of 452. Unpublished e-mail to author.

Katz, Stephen (1992). The Ethic of expediency: Classical rhetoric, technology, and the Holocaust. *College English, 54*(3), 255-275.

Kynell, Teresa C. (1996). *Writing in a milieu of utility: The move to technical communication in American engineering programs 1850-1950*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Lipus, Teresa (2006). International consumer protection: Writing adequate instructions for global audiences. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 36*(1), 75-91.

Maylath, Bruce, Vandepitte, Sonia, Minacori, Patricia, Isohella, Suvi, Mousten, Birthe, & Humbley, John (2013). Managing complexity: A technical communication/translation case study in multilateral international collaboration. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 22*(1), 67-84.

Munshi, Debashish, & McKie, David (2001). Toward a new cartography of intercultural communication: Mapping bias, business, and diversity. *Business Communication Quarterly, 64*(3), 9-22.

Neuleib, Jan (November 2012). 452. Unpublished e-mail to author.

Palmeri, Jason (2006). Disability studies, cultural analysis, and the critical practice of technical communication pedagogy. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 15*(1), 49-65.

Porter, James E. (1993). The role of law, policy, and ethics in corporate composing: Toward a practical ethics for professional writing. In Nancy Round Blyler & Charlotte Thralls (Eds.), *Professional communication: The social perspective* (pp. 128-143). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rutter, Russell (1989). ENG 452 Course proposal--Teaching technical writing. Unpublished course proposal. Illinois State University.

Salisbury, Gerald A. (2012). Translation and liability. *tcworld*(April).

Sapp, David Alan (2004). Global partnerships in business communication: An institutional collaboration between the United States and Cuba. *Business Communication Quarterly, 67*(3), 267-280.

Sapp, David Alan (2007). Teaching business communication in Nicaragua. *Business Communication Quarterly, 70*, 199-203.

Sauer, Beverly (2003). *The rhetoric of risk: Technical documentation in hazardous environments*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Savage, Gerald (2011). Seeking inter-racial collaborations in program design: A report on a study of technical and scientific communication programs in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the United States. *Programmatic Perspectives, 3*(1), 58-85s.

Savage, Gerald J. (1996). Redefining the responsibilities of teachers and the social position of the technical communicator. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 5*(3), 309-327.

Savage, Gerald J. (2004). Tricksters, fools, and sophists: Technical communication as postmodern rhetoric. In Teresa Kynell-Hunt & Gerald J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Strategies for professional status* (Vol. Two, pp. 167-193). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Savage, Gerald, & Mattson, Kyle (2011). Perspectives on diversity in technical communication programs. *Programmatic Perspectives, 3*(1), 5-57.

Sawyer, Thomas M. (1977). Introduction. In Thomas M. Sawyer (Ed.), *Technical and professional communication: Teaching in the two-year college, four-year*

college, professional school (First ed., pp. 1-8). Ann Arbor, MI: Professional Communication Press.

Selfe, Cynthia L. (Ed.). (2007). *Resources in technical communication: Outcomes and approaches*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Slack, Jennifer Daryl, Miller, David James, & Doak, Jeffrey (1993). The technical communicator as author: Meaning, power, authority. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 7*(1), 12-36.

Smith, Beatrice Quarshie (2012). *Reading and writing in the global workplace: Gender, literacy, and outsourcing in Ghana*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.

Smith, Howard T., & Shirk, Henrietta Nickels (1996). The perils of defective documentation: Preparing business and technical communicators to avoid products liability. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 10*(2), 187-202.

Staples, Katherine, & Ornatowski, Cezar (Eds.). (1997). *Foundations for teaching technical communication: Theory, practice, and program design*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex.

Starke-Meyerring, Doreen, & Wilson, Melanie (Eds.). (2008). *Designing globally networked learning environments: Visionary partnerships, policies, and pedagogies*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Sullivan, Dale (1990). Political-ethical implications of defining technical communication as a practice. *Journal of Advanced Composition, 10*(2), 375-386.

Sun, Huatong (2006). The triumph of users: Achieving cultural usability goals with user localization. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 15*(4), 457-481.

Watson, Helen, Yirrkala, The Yolngu community at Yirrkala, & David Wade Chambers, (1989, 2008). Singing the land, signing the land: A portfolio of exhibits Available from http://singing.indigenousknowledge.org/

Williams, Miriam F. (2010). *From Black codes to recodification: Removing the veil from regulatory writing*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.