

Call for Proposals: Special Issue of *Communication Design Quarterly* on Perspectives on Preparing Technical Communication Professionals for Today and the Future

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Proposals due: September 15th, 2017

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Venue: *Communication Design Quarterly (CDQ)*, the peer-reviewed publication of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)'s Special Interest Group on the Design of Communication (SIGDOC).

Overview: Technical communication (TC) practice is changing in significant ways, due largely to maturing technologies (e.g., high-speed networks, mobile devices, content management systems) and increasing consumer demand for content designed for a multitude of devices and delivery channels. Along with changes in practice come changes in the strategies and tools used and the roles and skills required. Technical communicators working in both academia and industry are thus interested in understanding what it means to be a technical communicator today. "Technical writer" is no longer the most accurate title for what members of the field do. Although some companies and academic programs are still preparing and recruiting the traditional technical writer, recent publications from academia and the news media show conflicting employment figures and competencies assessments based on the many titles that members of our profession assume (e.g., Brumberger & Lauer, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Kimball, 2015 & 2016; Sentz, 2016). Technical communicators, for example, can work as content managers and strategists. They can also be specialists in writing and communication. They can be information architects. They can also be designers, evaluators, or creators of user experience (UX).

Objective: For this special issue of *Communication Design Quarterly*, we seek authors from academia and industry who represent or have studied these changing roles and what these roles mean for preparing members of the field for today and the future. We are interested in perspectives from the seasoned consultant with an international presence and the views of mid- or entry-level communicators working in this landscape. We also want to hear from the experienced faculty member witnessing change in curriculum and employment, and the graduate student adapting as they advance on their academic careers. To this end, we welcome proposals for literature reviews, research studies, experience reports, and profiles or interviews with professionals of diverse levels and backgrounds.

Topics: Topics of interest for this special issue include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Explorations of the many job titles and related responsibilities that technical communicators take in the 21st century
- Strategies and reports from on-the-job training programs for recent graduates and/or analyses of strengths and weaknesses in academic preparation
- Stories and examples of academia-industry partnerships (e.g., advisory boards for programs, internships and co-ops, apprenticeship or mentoring programs), focusing on lessons for establishing and maintaining such forms of collaboration
- Inventories of skills and competencies expected from graduates in the diverse and changing landscape of technical communication-related jobs
- Surveys of curricular practices and trends in academic programs offering certificates, concentrations, and degrees in technical communication
- Ideas for designing and delivering continuing education programs for faculty and practitioners
- Reviews –particularly historical reviews- of academic programs and curricular practices in technical communication

Submissions: Submit a 250-300-word proposal that notes

- The overall topic/focus of the proposed literature review, research study, experience report, or profile/s or interview/s
- The approach the proposed submission will take to examine this topic
- The connection of the focus and approach to the theme of this special issue

Proposals should be emailed to Rebekka Andersen (randersen@ucdavis.edu) or Carlos Evia (cevia@vt.edu) before September 15th, 2017.

Schedule: The tentative publication schedule for this special issue is as follows:

- September 15th, 2017 – Proposals for special issue due
- October 2nd, 2017 – Decisions on proposals sent to submitters
- January 5th, 2018 – Initial manuscripts due

Questions: Questions on this special issue or should be sent to Rebekka Andersen (randersen@ucdavis.edu) or Carlos Evia (cevia@vt.edu).

References

Brumberger, E., & Lauer, C. (2015). The evolution of technical communication: An analysis of industry job postings. *Technical Communication*, 62(4), 224–243.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Technical Writers. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm>.

Kimball, M. A. (2015). Training and education: Technical communication managers speak out. *Technical Communication*, 62(2), 135-145.

Kimball, M. A. (2016). The golden age of technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 47(3), 330-358.

Sentz, R. (2016, Sept. 27). Four careers that are growing (not shrinking) because of new technology. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emsi/2016/09/27/four-careers-that-are-growing-not-shrinking-because-of-new-technology/#23dbb36c3311>.