We Wear Many Costumes

STC board

It’s been said over and over again that technical communicators wear many hats (shoes, coats, jackets). The technical communication field spans in endless directions: we edit, instructionally design, write, rewrite, proofread, construct websites, create copy, and more.

And many of us are doing all of these things while we are also wearing the hat of “student.” Keeping so many hats on one head is a hefty process. Luckily, we’re all in it together.

Resources at NCSU abound plentifully. One of the best is that of the NCSU @ STC chapter. Over the past couple of months, we’ve held happy hours, chocolate school, and a seminar on interviewing in the technical communication field. Even our activities come in many different shapes, sizes, and colors.

Hopefully by now you’ve had a chance to get to know our group and are excited about the upcoming activities the year holds. If not, now’s your opportunity. See what’s in store by reading through this issue, checking out our website, or talking to an officer. Chances are, we’re in your classes.

Getting involved in STC is another hat you get to wear proudly. Or, since it is the season, another great costume you can sport—but this one lasts all year (or life) long.

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Our Mission
Connecting students to the future of technical communication

STC Mission
Creating and supporting a forum for the communities of practice in the profession of technical communication

We’re here for you! Check out our website at www.ncsu.edu/stud_orgs/stc

See what’s going on with the Carolina chapter: www.stc-carolina.org

View the main governing STC website: www.stc.org

Contact us via snail mail: NC State University Student Chapter-STC c/o Sarah Egan Warren Box 8105 Raleigh, NC 27695-8105
Presidential Memo

— E-Ching Lee

It is about the time of the semester when you realize that you have bitten off more than you can chew in your classes. It is about the time of the academic term when your assignments start to fall into a never-ending checklist of “Things to do before I sleep.” Fall break is over and, from here, it is uphill (both ways) to Thanksgiving.

Everyone needs a break some time.

As we move into October and November, keep in mind that the STC has several events planned to help you get that needed break from books, assignments, and papers. First, we plan to organize a trip to the North Carolina State Fair. Come and taste a fried Snickers bar or watch pig races.

Next, the STC plans to schedule a session with the faculty members about the mysterious process of registering for spring classes. Bring your questions and potential class picks and we will have someone there to try to show you the way.

Finally, mark your calendars for the November 12, 2005 Backpacks vs. Briefcase Chapter Challenge. The NC State STC is challenging the Carolina STC to game night. Join us for a night of board games and networking.

In the end, the STC’s mission is to connect students. Through our activities, we strive to connect students to each other, faculty members, former students, potential employers, sound career advice, and to the Triangle. So come on out, leave your homework behind, and connect.

Editor’s Soapbox – My Keyboard, My Crutch

— Heather Brautman

All these years of typing away have made for some interesting talents: I’ve had people walk by my desk and ask whether I’m typing nonsense (yes, because that’s often how I prefer to spend my time) and tell me I’ve got the fastest fingers in the west. I kind of like it. I can’t sing, I can’t tap dance, I can’t play chess. I mean, it’s something, right?

Unfortunately, I think I’ve trained my brain to keep up with my fingers when typing, but relax when I’m trying to hand write notes. I just can’t make my pen move fast enough! I find myself having to say, “Wait!” and “Hold on!” way more often than when I’m typing.

Sure, I could carry around a little keyboard with me at all times. Heavens no, I wouldn’t join the trendy crowd with their Sidekicks and text messaging, my fingers need actual keys to perform their “amazing capabilities.” And fashion designers these days just don’t make purses cute enough to fit a full-size keyboard. (Hey, maybe there’s a way to fund my retirement!)

So my dilemma is whether to keep feeding my crutch and continue training my brain along with my keyboarding fingers, at the expense of occasional hand-writing slowness. Thing is, everything is going electronic these days, so my hands probably won’t be meeting up with a pen very often anyway.

Type on!
There’s a New Ph.D. in Town

— Michelle Mebust

Fall semester 2005 marks the advent of a new Ph.D. program at North Carolina State University. A joint offering from the departments of Communications and English, the interdisciplinary doctoral program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media (CRDM) capitalizes on the strengths of both departments. I recently discussed the new academic program with Dr. Jason Swarts, Assistant Professor in English and a member of the six-person planning committee for the new degree.

According to Dr. Swarts, the CRDM program is “fresh in orientation, tackling the difficult concepts, theories, and practices related to oral, written, and visual modes of communication that are engendered by rapid changes in information and communication technologies. The importance of communication research is increasing and we needed a new, updated approach to stake out conceptual and practical grounds for meaning-making surrounding the issues identified above.”

Both Dr. Swarts and the CRDM Web site list the following goals for the CRDM program:

- Producing educators who can teach oral, written, and visual modes of communication
- Preparing professionals, such as industry managers, to be experienced researchers
- Posing and solving research questions with respect to new information technologies and communication media
- Synthesizing theories and concepts to fashion an integrated foundation for researching and teaching issues pertaining to new communication technologies
- Familiarizing students with the existing central theories and concepts relating to oral, written, and visual communication modes
- Acquiring detailed historical and critical understanding of how the relationships among communication technologies, theoretical perspectives, and rhetorical practices are changing
- Gaining experience with a variety of research and analytical methods

The degree requirements highlight the program’s emphasis on research. Successful candidates must produce a dissertation displaying “original research, a clear contribution to the field,” according to Dr. Swarts. CRDM students work with program faculty members to create such areas of study as computer-mediated communication; visual rhetoric; digital culture; electronic communication across the curriculum; media and technology policy; textual mediation; digital literacy; and online information design. Students and their advisors build an interdisciplinary track specific to each student’s research interests.

Five core courses are required of CRDM students:

- CRD 701: History and Theory of Communication Technology
- CRD 702: Rhetoric and Digital Media
- CRD 703: Communication in Networked Society
- CRD 704: Pedagogy and Technology
- CRD 790: Issues in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Students must also complete six hours of research methods, six hours of professional preparation, and 20 hours of research, exams, and dissertation. Electives may be taken through the Communications and English departments, as well as other departments, including Business Management, Computer Science, Psychology, and Design.

CRDM faculty fall into two groups: program faculty and affiliated faculty. Program faculty members belong to the Communications or English departments and teach core courses, electives, and special topics courses. According to Dr. Swarts, program faculty “direct student research and have research and teaching interests that are closely aligned with the research goals” of the program. Affiliated faculty work in the Communication, English, or other departments and teach elective courses. All faculty members serve as needed on advisory committees for students.

Eight students are in the CRDM program this year: five full-time and three part-time, although CRDM faculty members recommend a student be enrolled full-time. Not only are most of the courses offered during the day, but many CRDM students have teaching assistantships that often require daytime teaching. The eight student complement represents the maximum number of new students the CRDM program expects to enroll each year, thus ensuring that each student receives adequate attention and funding.

Anyone interested in learning more about or applying to the CRDM program, including currently enrolled master’s degree students in Technical Communication, can find further information on the CRDM program Web site at www.chass.ncsu.edu/crdm.
Defining Glossaries, Part II

— Michelle Kidd Tackaberry

(One of the many other major sets of definitions.
companies’ products as well. (Sun Technical Publications 2003, 234)

Companies that produce large amounts of technical help documentation understand that a glossary is more than a 

recommendations determining what terms to include in a glossary based on audience considerations. For example, it instructs writers that documents for first-time users should probably include terms they may feel are “obvious” such as window, screen, menu, start up, and command.”

While documentation for intermediate users will not need to include most of those simpler terms, writers should “err on the side of including terms that most readers might actually know” documents for experienced developers will need to include only Apple-specific words and terms in glossaries (167).

Apple goes on to urge glossary writers to include in their glossary entries examples and context that are specific to the product about which they are writing, use ordinary terms to connect them to technical meanings to aid in comprehension, and above all emphasize conciseness and clarity. Most of the appendix, however, is dedicated to matters of form: whether to include part of speech (only if the term is used in the document in more than one part of speech); how to alphabetize terms, especially those with numbers, capitalization and grammatical issues such as sentence fragments (acceptable); whether to use gerunds (unacceptable when defining verbs); and whether to include pronunciation guidelines (almost always acceptable).

Sun Technical Publications’ well-known style guide for the computer industry, Read me first!, includes a chapter entitled “Glossary guidelines” that dedicates four pages to instructing writers on when a glossary should be included and which terms to include. The style guide explains that terms included in a glossary must be “important to the subject, with simple and concise definitions that are appropriate for the context” (231). Glossaries should always be included in new product documentation or texts undergoing “major revisions” (234). The simplest way to determine what terms need to be defined is to do so when they are newly introduced in a text. Sun recommends that writers produce glossary terms as they are writing the text containing the new terms, so that their definitions will be accurate and in context.

The remainder of Sun’s glossary chapter is dedicated to form: what parts of speech to include (nouns usually, but the part of speech of the term in the document indicates what part of speech should be defined), defining the term’s other parts of speech (yes), whether to define acronyms (yes), creating cross-references, and alphabetizing terms. It gives no clues as to how to write a definition but does provide some caution as to what constitutes a “bad” definition: any definition that restates the term (238).

The SAS Publications Division (2004) includes information on the glossary.
writing process for documentation developers that provides specific instructions on what terms should be included in glossaries and when a glossary should begin.

Documentation developers are cautioned to consider their audience first, and then identify a “core technical vocabulary” of which they can reasonably expect users of their documents to be familiar (2). This core vocabulary does not need to be included in a glossary unless documentation terms are used in a new way. What should be included are any terms that are defined within the document and any SAS programming element that is not identified as being a part of the core technical vocabulary.

SAS maintains a database of terminology called GLOSS to which documentation developers must refer before compiling their glossary. Terms already included in GLOSS that are defined suitably for the writer’s use must be added to the glossary verbatim as they are defined in GLOSS, but writers have the option to request or make edits to existing GLOSS entries if those entries do not meet the needs of their document. SAS points writers to an internal training handout on how to write glossary definitions that includes an extensive list of examples of problematic definitions, but SAS provides no guidelines that follow the rhetorical technique of formal definition.

The notable exception I found of technical documentation instructions employing formal definition was from the IBM Corporation. In a white paper on terminology that includes clear instructions on writing definitions that follow classic rhetorical and lexical technique, IBM’s Mary Sturgeon (2004) defines a glossary succinctly as a “selected list of terms defined and explained for a particular field of knowledge” (1). Sturgeon divides the words used in any kind of technical documentation into four categories:

- Familiar words for familiar concepts;
- Familiar words for unfamiliar concepts;
- Unfamiliar words for familiar concepts;
- Unfamiliar words for unfamiliar concepts.

According to Sturgeon, unless terms in technical documentation are familiar words for familiar concepts, they should be defined in a glossary. Sturgeon explains how to write a definition by using the rhetorical technique of formal definition: “to define a term, you place it in a category (classify it) and show how it differs from other things in that category” (2).

Glossary as Rhetorical Opportunity

The humble glossary takes on grander proportions when it is understood as a keeper of technical terminology. Just as a dictionary preserves language, a glossary can help preserve meaning across multiple instances of translations of a single document. IBM’s style guidelines note the need for consistency in technical, marketing, and user interfaces to avoid misunderstanding and misuse of technical terminology, especially when many of those terms have usages outside of the rhetorical situation of the documentation, such as the word window. Sturgeon cautions writers to maintain a word-usage list to prevent misuse of key technical terms and to be certain to provide a glossary entry for each term. A glossary can help ensure consistency and accuracy across a development project, ensuring that everyone is essentially speaking the same language.

A glossary developed in step with new technical products will also ensure that all users comprehend unfamiliar terms in the same way. This issue becomes clear when we consider the need to translate and localize technical documentation. In some languages, technical terms might vary depending on their usage in hardware or software documentation; other terms may be untranslatable, or worse, translatable in more than one way, multiplying the possibilities for misuse and miscomprehension (Muhlhaus-Moyer 2004).

If you are documenting new technology, a glossary is almost mandatory. An audience that is unfamiliar with the topic can probably benefit from a major set of definitions.

A clearly defined glossary item, however, can help translators and localizers with their work by reflecting a company’s understanding of the meaning of technical terms. The glossary can then become a crucial document for translators; in this context, a glossary is a miniature multilingual dictionary that can point users to the correct context and usage of technical terms.

Conclusion

Dictionaries teach people their own language and situate terms in the historical progression of communication itself. Glossaries, as mini-dictionaries, contextualize terms in a specific technical situation. Because glossaries can help define the very parameters of a rhetorical situation—can, in fact, succinctly make the connection between a term and how that term should be understood in a technical context—they provide much more than an opportunity to help a user understand what a word means.

For technical communicators, writing a glossary should not be an afterthought to assist in making a document usable or user-friendly but a part of the entire communication process between a company and its customers.

As new products go to market, they introduce new terminology into the conversational vernacular between the company and customers and between products and users. Defining what something is and what something does is considered by lexicographers to be a way to get close to the ever-elusive truth as we know it today. It is unfortunate that technical communication textbooks and professional writing guidelines devote such little space and effort to the art of writing glossary definitions. Perhaps it is time to make an explicit connection between the rhetorical technique of formal definition and the writing of definitions for glossaries. ❖

This article will be published in its entirety (including a bibliography) in an upcoming issue of Technical Communication, the leading journal of the Society for Technical Communication. Publication of this article does not imply endorsement of a product or service by the STC. Further distribution of this article must be approved by its author and the editors of Technical Communication.
Visit STC Online!

Thirsty? Mark your calendar now for the “back to school” happy hour January 12 at Playmakers, right down the road from class. Join classmates, friends, family, and more for a relaxed evening of socializing.

— Michelle Kidd Tackaberry

The STC website has been revamped and rewritten for the renewed school year.

Our website contains the latest schedule of STC events, contact information for STC officers and advisors, information about the Society for Technical Communication, and much more. As part of our drive for excellence on our way to take home another chapter award to grace the STC@NCSU award wall, the website will be continually updated to reflect the chapter’s commitment to its membership. We will feature information about our events, news about our members, resources and links to help our members succeed in their endeavors while at NC State, and just about anything else we can think of along the way.

The STC@NCSU website is also the quickest way to contact any STC officer, reach the Membership Manager or Faculty Advisor, and quickly order a stunning NCSU Tech Comm t-shirt! You may also offer any comments, suggestions, articles or ideas by emailing me via the site or at my email address: mktackabery@gmail.com. I promise I will listen to all suggestions with respect and implement as many ideas as I can accommodate.

So get clicking and visit us today! www.ncsu.edu/studorgs/stc

STC@NCSU Officers for 2005-2006:

E-Chung Lee
Michelle Tackaberry
Michele Melott
Will Flowers
Linda C. Harte
Brittany Brown

STC@NCSU — the future of technical communication

STC@NCSU is the student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication at North Carolina State University. Our faculty advisor is Sarah Eggett, Won Stanley Deloach.

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TECHNICALLY SPEAKING...
STC Attends Chocolate School

 homework was never this tasty. On August 28, members of the NCSU chapter joined the Carolina Chapter at Lindt Chocolatiers in Crabtree Valley Mall for a lesson in chocolate. For the first time in history, no one protested when “homework” was assigned—tasting the various goodies that attendees received at the end of the program!

Mail Call

Dear Technically Speaking,

I’ve joined the STC, but my budget makes it hard to do the other stuff, seminars, webinars, conferences. I feel like I want to take advantage of everything I can, but it all costs more money. Help! —Strapped

Dear Strapped,

One benefit you’ve already given yourself is joining the STC now. As a student, your rate is less than half of the regular membership rate, and you’ll enjoy that savings the entire time you’re a student. It is true that some (not all, for example, Chapter meetings are usually free, as are most SIGs) events have additional charges. Most times though, there are major discounts for students.

Don’t be afraid to look for other venues to save as well. When the Carolina Chapter held Tri-Doc, a large conference for technical communicators in the Triangle, they offered a big student discount, but also provided the opportunity (to students and non-students alike) to attend for free if you volunteered (at the registration desk, as a room monitor, etc). This savings included the entire two day program, free meals, laptop bag, and more.

There’s also nothing wrong with simply asking. “One time, I really wanted to attend an STC seminar on PowerPoint, but my company could not afford the charge,” says Heather Brautman. “I emailed Frances Worth of the Carolina Chapter, who was coordinating it. I let her know I was a student, and asked whether there was any type of ‘scholarship’ to the event. The day of the event, it turned out they hadn’t been able to fill the room, so she emailed me that I could go for free!” It never hurts to ask.

Got a question?
Email heatherpez@excite.com
Reader’s Review

— Heather Brautman

In his book, *The Grouchy Grammarian*, author Thomas Parrish introduces us to his friend (or perhaps, alter-ego), the Grouchy Grammarian. This poor fellow suffers immensely at the hands of ill-advised journalists, misinformed writers, and poorly educated newspaper publishers. Readers of the book will feel much empathy as the Grouchy Grammarian guides Parrish on a detailed tour of his incredible collection of “errors.”

To meet the Grouchy Grammarian in life would probably put most people off, but he’s quite a sympathetic character in the book. He asks whether writers have “never loved words and ideas, the way a carpenter loves wood or a chef loves herbs? Didn’t they want to know subjects and verbs, adverbs and prepositions, as the carpenter knows nails and sandpaper and hot glue? Have they never taken a sentence apart to see what made it run?”

Although the sheer idea of sentence diagramming may make many students run for the hills, his guide to the 47 common mistakes is actually interesting, helpful, and eye-opening. One tip I’d never known is the distinguishing of “may” and “might”, two words I’d previously used interchangeably. Now I know that “may” doesn’t merely express a possibility, but a strong likelihood, where “might” is actually used with a high degree of doubt. As the Grouch says, “may expresses a good probability, might implies a long shot.”

I also have been guilty of using “which” and “that” synonymously. This would get me a giant “Harumph” from the Grouch. Thanks to the book, I now know that “a person is never a which; only a nonperson can be a which, and a person or a nonperson can each be a that.”

When it comes down to it, this book may be just another option for your tech communication bookshelf. But it’s fun and friendly to read, rather than slogging through another impersonal selection. Plus, it’s easy to keep in mind the Grouch’s opening statement: “Think! Think about what you’re saying—know what it means and where it came from.” This carries along well with a lot of the theory we’re taught at NCSU. The Grouchy Grammarian would be proud.

Dr. Covington’s New Responsibilities

— Heather Brautman

Every student in the Tech Comm program is tasked with completing ENG 517. Depending on faculty rotation, students may be taught by Dr. David Covington, who guides the class through the Macromedia suite of products including Fireworks, Flash, and Dreamweaver. For many students, it is their first introduction to these important products that so many employers are requiring. Although Dr. Covington is not teaching ENG 517 this year, he still remains firmly involved with the Tech Comm program and the English Department in general. “Although I’m pretty busy with scheduling, I do miss being in class,” he says. “I’m already looking forward to getting back to teaching next year.”

Last year, the Department’s regular scheduling officer required a leave to finish a research project, and Dr. Covington agreed to step in in his place, acquiring the new temporary title of Assistant Head for Scheduling for the English Department. He’s a good fit because he’s actually performed the position before, back in the 1990s. Although the Technical Communication department makes up just a small slice of the English Department pie, there are actually around 7,500 students gracing Tompkins and Winston halls each semester. Those students are seated in approximately 330 sections of classes with varying numbers of professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants. Dr. Covington is the guiding force in ensuring that every one of those teachers, students, and assigned classrooms meet up with each other in the right place at the right time. “Essentially, scheduling is like doing a gigantic four-dimensional puzzle in which pieces frequently disappear and the rules change constantly,” says Covington.

Just because he’s not heading up a classroom this school year doesn’t mean that Dr. Covington is out of reach for those students with a Flash question, schedule concerns, or those in need of technical communication advice. He’s currently overseeing an independent study and is involved with the training of new professional writing teaching assistants. Students gearing up for the “Capstone Course”, ENG 675, will also be happy to know that Dr. Covington will be one of the faculty involved in the advising/defense process.
Join the Chapter Challenge!

One of the best things about being a member of an STC student chapter is getting all of the benefits of the STC at a discounted rate. Plus, you get the opportunity to network and socialize with members of other chapters, including our neighboring local chapter, Carolina. Many NCSU tech comm graduates go on to become members of the Carolina chapter, serving on the executive board, SIG committees, and more. These folks will be your future associates, potential friends, even mentors. Why not take advantage of this great opportunity to meet and greet members of the Carolina Chapter, all in a fun, social environment?

Join fellow “Tech Commandos” from the NCSU chapter as we challenge the Carolina Chapter to an evening of games! The NCSU chapter needs your skills at drawing (Pictionary!), language (Taboo!), words (Scrabble!), small plastic balls (ping pong!), large resin balls (billiards!) and more. Don’t worry if you’re not a champ... who is? The goal of this chapter-on-chapter evening is just to have fun.

There’ll be snacks, music, and laughs guaranteed, so RSVP to Team Tech Commandos Captain Michelle Kidd Tackberry (mtackaberry@nc.rr.com) today!

When: Saturday, Nov 12, 5pm—until?
Where: Durham (we’ll send more info)
Who: NCSU Tech Com students and Carolina Chapter members
Why: Take a break from your research papers and finals cramming to relax and play games with new and old friends.

Confessions of a TA

— Will Flowers

I think I’m neglecting my studies. No, I know I’m neglecting my studies, but my students are some of the happiest you’ll find on a college campus. I’ve been a TA for the past few semesters, and this fall I’ve arrived at the show, the big time, the barn dance. I have a class to teach.

I also have classes to take. I’m taking three courses, all of which I love and wouldn’t trade for the world, but somewhere between life and learning I’m now in charge of others’ academic careers as well. My own was troubling enough. I find it hard to balance a life where I’m both giving and receiving grades, teaching and studying, boring and being bored.

For any TA, the classroom is the perfect test for how well one can maintain a semblance of control and authority in what is often a hostile environment. I’ve been lucky this semester, none of my students have threatened me or others, and most of them wear clothes to class. Others have not been so fortunate.

Through all this, I’ve realized I know nothing about teaching. I’ve been a student my entire life (Zen guy says: I think we’re all students of life, at least), and I’ve been privy to many a class activity. The difference, though, lies in lectern placement. Being on the business end has sharpened my appreciation for how much preparation must go into each class. Like any good prison, the bars and fence must be in place before the prisoners arrive.

Sound and time are the biggest issues I’m facing. Sound, because there is none unless I either create or incite, time because there is both too little and too much. The first lesson of teaching is this: you have to say everything. As a student you never really understand the value of having a rambling moron leading discussions, until you are the rambling moron. And, strangely enough, students don’t start their own conversations about business writing. They need prompts.

Time is the trickiest of all dimensions. It is simultaneously the most abundant and sparse resource, and teaching somehow distorts it. An hour and fifteen minutes in front of a class is an eternity, and there’s never time to grade all twenty three papers.

Despite the constant work, demanding students, and night terrors, I like the idea of teaching. As almost any teacher will tell you, and as clichéd as it sounds, it’s rewarding to see students do well. The sleepy eyes and dopy mouths often hide students willing to do succeed if tricked into it.
Chapter News

Another great Tech Comm orientation was held on Monday, August 15. New students plus returning ones attended the gathering, where Dr. Dicks went over the MS Student Handbook, pointed out helpful websites, and modeled the excellent NCSU Tech Comm t-shirt. Welcome to: Jennifer Cianchetta-Riordan, Chatham Fralix, Jennifer Fritz, Lee Ann Gillen, Christin Gulick, Jennifer Hodorowicz, Lisa Johnson, Justin Jory, Michelle Pattie, and Kimberly Williams. Professors Susan Katz, David Covington, and Jason Swarts also attended.

Board members welcomed a new addition: Amelia Vogler, who will be heading up Community Service efforts. Amelia currently is planning fundraising efforts through the Red Cross for Hurricane Katrina relief plus participation in two charity walks: The Walk for Hope and The Memory Walk, which raise money and awareness for fighting Mental Illness and Alzheimer’s disease. Please contact Amelia at avogler@nc.rr.com with ideas. Keep your eyes on your email for more information.

Board members met on Sept. 13 to discuss future planning for the chapter. The team did last minute preparations for the Interviewing to Get the Job seminar and planned an upcoming happy hour.

E-Ching Lee had an article published in the Carolina Chapter’s newsletter, Carolina Communique. Way to go!

STC Training Program: Oct. 20-21, 2005

Imagine a two-day course covering the things you need to advance your career in technical communication: an in-depth course taught by some of the most respected names in the field.

Now imagine that you have a choice of five such courses, each covering a different subject within technical communication. That's the STC Training Program: a new learning venue scheduled for October 20-21.

The five two-day courses, described in detail at www.stc.org/training, cover the following subjects:

- Leadership in Information Management: Developing the Business Framework and Implementation Roadmap for Single Sourcing, Content Management, and Knowledge Management
- XML: From Hand-Coding to WYSIWYG Authoring
- The Architecture of Content Creating and Using Personas to Improve Usability
- Focusing on Content: Making Web Sites Work for Users
- The STC Training Program will take place at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Crystal City, VA.

Hotel accommodations include up to three nights lodging in Crystal City, Virginia. Registration includes two breakfasts and two lunches.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity!
Profiles in Professorship

In each issue of *Technically Speaking*, we will feature a profile of one of the distinguished professors of the MS in Technical Communication program. In this issue, we profile Dr. David Rieder.

— Heather Brautman

Dr. David Rieder

Students who have put in a couple of semesters at NCSU may have had the opportunity to take a course taught by Dr. David Rieder. Although Dr. Rieder currently is not teaching within our program (he is teaching ENG 323, “Writing in the Rhetorical Tradition”), his involvement is still making an impact on all Masters students.

Dr. Rieder received his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2002 and joined the NCSU faculty in the same year. Since then, graduate students have had the chance to take his version of ENG 515 (“Rhetoric of Science and Technology”). Rhetoric remains close to Dr. Rieder’s heart. His research interests include theories and philosophies of rhetoric and writing, multimedia design, critical theory, and post/modern theory.

When asked about his favorite NCSU offerings, he said, “I have two: The first is ENG 422, ‘Writing Theory and the Writing Process,’ which I teach regularly. In ENG 422, I have the opportunity to introduce my field to juniors and seniors. The other favorite was an honors course that I taught in 2002, ENG 491H. In essence, it was an introduction to experimental or avant garde writing in the twentieth century—especially a few of the more recent electronic genres.”

It is this idea of experimenting that Dr. Rieder wishes to impress upon all students. When asked about his advice to those in the tech comm field, he replied, “Be creative. Read outside of your field—I’d suggest the contemporary arts—as a way to find new perspectives, new ‘logics’ on which to draw in your work.” He also suggested some outside study: “If you don’t already speak a second language, learn one.”

The learning of a second language may take a different sort of form than the one immediately assumed. Dr. Rieder’s hobbies include computer programming, high-level languages for the WWW, like Javascript, Actionscript, PHP, etc. He says, “I find programming relaxing and really fun.” But students won’t find Dr. Rieder solely locked to a computer. He also enjoys many athletic activities, including training for a triathlon. He hopes to start competing in local sprints next season.

Local meaning downtown Raleigh, where Dr. Rieder lives and prefers to “play.” His favorites include Helios and Whole Foods, and industrious students may even find him at a King’s Barcade show. He also recommends Lilly’s and the Rockford to those students looking for a relaxing meal.

“If you don’t already speak a second language, learn one.”

— Dr. David Rieder

Although Dr. Rieder has been busy publishing his work (he has a column in *The Writing Instructor*, a book chapter in Web.Studies, and developed (and co-edited) the “Post-Digital Studies” issue for *Enculturation: An Electric Journal for Rhetorical and Cultural Studies*), he also takes time for “fun” reading as well. “A novel that has stuck with me over the years is Bayard Johnson’s *Damned Right*,” he says. “It ‘dramatizes’ some of the cultural theory to which I’m still drawn. In Cultural Studies, I recommend Brian Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual*. It’s a fascinating exploration of ‘the virtual,’ a relatively new topic in the Humanities—and a topic that is all about tech.”

With such diverse tastes, one might wonder how Dr. Rieder has time to fit everything into such a busy schedule. Perhaps it’s what’s not in the picture that gives the clue—Dr. Rieder says he does not have a TV and recently sold his car! This gives him time to enjoy the Raleigh scenery on his GT mountain bike. Make sure to wave hello if you’re on your way to class!
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