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Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
Autumn 2015

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President's view

First of all, I'd like to thank Rick Gould for responding to my plea for a relatively broad but still clear and unambiguous description about what we do. Rick had two suggestions, one a very succinct:

"We describe what people need to know, in a form that they can readily understand"

and another, more comprehensive:

"We condense complex, technical and legislative subjects into more digestible sets of information, focusing on what people need to know and when they need to know it, so they can perform a task correctly, have the right effect and at the right time."

Both will be ideal when I'm next manning a stand at a career fair and I want to give an instant overview to the casual enquirer. They may also find their way into my own repertoire as a quick-and-easy way to begin a work-related conversation.

Time and money

As a Council, we sometimes receive suggestions from members of projects we could become involved in or initiatives we could start. Some of these suggestions are very good ones, and we implement them when we can. We have two big constraints, though: time and money.

We are an organisation of volunteers. Unlike some professional bodies that can count their membership in thousands (or even tens of thousands) we can't afford staff to run everything for us. Instead, we rely on our members. Some are already involved in local area groups, others help out with Technical Communication UK (TCUK), while others attend careers fairs and other events on our behalf. Because we are all volunteers, we juggle what we do with the ISTC (and I deliberately say 'with', not 'for' ... we're all in this together:

I don't do what I do 'for them') with our commitments to family, friends, work and the million-and-one other things that make us feel that time is passing at an ever-increasing rate. As I'm not suggesting that we 'remove' any of our other commitments, the only thing that will give us more time is to have more of us. If you're an ISTC member and you're not already involved in some way, could you consider doing something? It doesn't have to be a regular commitment - it could be as simple as offering to share some experiences at one local group meeting. Every little helps. However, if you are interested in doing more, Council is always on the look-out for new members, and I know the TCUK team is looking to spread the load a little more as well.

Closely linked to our ever-present need for more volunteers is a need for more members. Subscriptions are our major source of income, and the money we get from them is ploughed back into the things the ISTC provides. If you work with technical communicators who aren't members, ask them why not. The interview with Iain Wright on pages 10-11 gives some convincing arguments.

Breaking boundaries

The special focus of this year's Technical Communication UK conference is 'Breaking the Boundaries of Technical Communication'. This is something I do all the time - and have done since before I understood that what I was doing *was* technical communication. If you work in a large organisation, you may not have experienced this - but I found that if we were communicating at any level with customers (actual or potential) about our products or services at any stage (for pre-sales, through sales and onto product documentation and after-sales support), I was involved.

In both of the companies I have in mind, the marketing department consisted of a single individual whose main role was to devise a marketing strategy and to check that the collateral I (and others) were producing was 'on message'... but she did not have the capacity to produce the materials herself. The support desk was fully stretched responding to enquiries - they didn't have time to create short 'how to' guides for the more common queries.

If technical communication is to survive and thrive as a profession, we need to be aware both of our core competencies and of the 'optional extras' we can provide. Depending on our backgrounds, we can

offer so much more than may initially be apparent. Our diversity is our strength, as is the fact that for many of us, technical communication is a second (or third) career, so we have a wealth of previous experience to draw on. Some of us also have a wide variety of 'supplementary' skills, ranging from web and user interface development to course design and training delivery.

The information on the conference website talks about us moving on from the technical communication we know today: for some of my clients, I am still trying to move them on from the technical communication they knew yesterday. I acknowledge, though, that the more 'traditional' approach suits some industries - and I feel quite strongly that we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater. The 'core' competency of providing clear, unambiguous information that is fit for purpose, remains. **C**

Alison Peck FISTC

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Member news

New Members

Member

Chris Burden	Edinburgh
Audrey Christophory	Glasgow
Stephen Crabbe	Hampshire
Bruce Felstead	Cambridge
Rikke Johannsen	Denmark
Ian Knight	Bristol
Neil Matheson	West Lothian
Andrew Mills	Market Harborough
Ellen Moar	Edinburgh
Sunil Panchal	Ely
Edward Portas	Hertford
Simon Porter	Thirsk
Matthew Reilly	Suffolk
Robert Tait	York
Dee Vincent-Day	Sheffield
Andrew Welsby	March

Junior

Mark Hopewell	Shrewsbury
Sita Patel	South Yorkshire
Graham Thompson	Gloucestershire

Rejoiners

Fellow

Sandra Priestley	Thetford
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Member

Stephen Valentine	Surrey
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The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators is the largest UK body representing information development professionals, serving both our members and the wider technical communication community.

What the ISTC offers



Professional development and recognition

Resources and opportunities to develop and diversify skills, stay up to date with trends and technologies, and get recognition for achievements.

Our CPD (Continuous Professional Development) framework enables you to provide evidence of your learning in all its forms, and our Awards programme gives you the opportunity to showcase excellent work.

Communicator



Communicator professional journal

Communicator is the ISTC's award-winning quarterly professional journal, covering the breadth of technical communications, offering in-depth articles, case studies, book and product reviews.

Now you've read a sample article, would you like to see more? The journal is free to our members and is also available on subscription.



ISTC Community

The ISTC offers opportunities to network, exchange expertise, and stay in touch with the UK technical communication industry – through a range of online groups, local events, and InfoPlus+ (our monthly newsletter).

You can find us on LinkedIn, Eventbrite, YouTube and Twitter (@ISTC_org).



Technical Communication UK

The ISTC hosts Technical Communication UK, the annual conference that aims to meet the needs of technical communicators, their managers and clients, from every corner of the industry.

Open to all, visit www.technicalcommunicationuk.com for the latest news.



ISTC Resources

The ISTC offers access to a range of resources, including our own books, various templates, articles summarising key technical communication issues and discounted British Standards publications.

