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DAVID JACKSON
Director, Technical Publications, Rivian

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InfoPlus

Monthly newsletter from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

September 2022

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The ISTC is the largest UK body representing scientific and technical communicators. If you are involved in technical writing, technical illustration, or communicating technical information in other ways, it's the professional association that can support your career. Interested in membership? Find out more here.

This free newsletter is emailed to about 1500 people. As well as ISTC news, *InfoPlus* contains listings and articles of general interest to the profession. Subscribe here.

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From the editor

Saying that 'the year has flown past' always seems like a cliché, but in this instance, it really has gone in very quickly. It's a year since my first edition of



InfoPlus, and I can safely say that I have enjoyed the twelve months.

However, I must stress that *InfoPlus* is your newsletter. It is for technical communicators by technical communicators. So, if you have spotted an article that you thought was thought-provoking, or listened to a podcast that you thought made an excellent point, do send in the information to me so we can share it with our fellow technical communicators.

Michaël

ISTC News

UK Technical Communication Awards 2022

Linda Robins FISTC, President

Technical documentation awards

The judging for the technical documentation element of the UKTC Awards is now complete. The Awards will be presented at the ISTC's TCUK Metro Online Conference on 27 September.

Professional awards

In addition, Professional Awards will be presented at the conference as follows:

Horace Hockley Award

Presented to a person or organization that, in the opinion of the ISTC Council, has made a considerable contribution to the technical communications industry over a sustained period.

Mike Austin Award

An occasional award presented for outstanding service to the ISTC over a period of time in recognition of hard work and conduct of an individual who has helped the ISTC to attain and exceed its objectives.



Communicator awards

As part of the UK Technical Communication Awards 2022, you can vote for your favourite *Communicator* article. The eligible articles were published in Autumn 2021, Winter 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022.

Section 1 asks general questions about Communicator.

Section 2 gives you the opportunity to vote for your favourite three articles.

Section 3 gives you an opportunity to vote for your favourite regular column.

Section 4 gives you space to leave general feedback about Communicator.

Vote [here](#).

Voting closes on 15 November 2022.

TCUK Metro Online 2022: Tuesday 27 September

The event will include the ISTC AGM and UKTC Awards presentations.

Our theme this year is:

TechComm State of Flux: where are we going?

Presentations and discussion will include:

- ▶ Fundamentals: Chris Hester
- ▶ Information architecture: Lief Erickson
- ▶ Conversation design: Maaïke Groenewege
- ▶ Change management: Larry Swanson

The schedule is as follows:

- ▶ AGM (ISTC members only): 13:00 to 13:30
- ▶ UKTC Awards presentations: 13:35 to 14:05
- ▶ Presentations with Q&A: 14:10 to 17:00



Everyone is welcome to attend. To receive a registration link, please email our office on istc@istc.org.uk.

N.B. The AGM is open to ISTC members only.

Did you know you could advertise in this space?

■ Reach an engaged, specialist audience of content professionals!



■ Join MadCap, 3di and many others who advertise in this e-newsletter!

■ Ideal for product releases, news, courses/events, brand awareness, and recruitment!

Contact felicity@tou-can.co.uk for further details!

About the conference speakers

Lief Erickson is the founder and principal consultant of Intuitive Stack, a content strategy consultancy. He began his career in the content industry as a technical writer and has held positions as an information



architect and content strategist. His focus is to reduce or remove friction wherever it is in your tool stack or processes.

He holds a bachelor's degree with a dual focus in Technical Writing and German. Lief has an MA in Content Strategy from the University of Applied Sciences, FH Joanneum (Graz, Austria), where he teaches information architecture. He is a contributor to the DITA-OT open source project and presents at conferences on topics from ContentOps to taxonomies and search and more.

Maaïke Groenewege is an independent conversation designer at Convocat in Hilversum, the Netherlands.

As a conversation designer, Maaïke combines her background in theoretical linguistics, technical communication, and her passion for the human mind. She has developed chatbots and voice assistants for Dutch Chamber of Commerce, ABN Amro bank, Independer, and Essent.



Maaïke is very active in the conversational community: she founded Convoclub, an online community for designers, linguists, and language lovers. She regularly speaks at conferences and meetups.

Chris Hester is a senior manager at UL Solutions, where she leads a global team of web content designers and publishes and oversees web content strategy and governance. She is an accredited trainer for



CPTC Training, a Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication, and has presented at the STC Summit, the TCUK conference, and other events.

ISTC Social Media

ISTC on LinkedIn

There are ISTC groups on LinkedIn for ISTC members which include:

- Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
www.linkedin.com/groups/1858546

England

- Cambridge Technical Communicators
www.linkedin.com/groups/1805651
- ISTC Midlands Area Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/4835591
- Thames Valley Area Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/4805266
- ISTC Yorkshire Area Group for Communication Professionals
www.linkedin.com/groups/4662452

Scotland

- Technical Writers (East Scotland ISTC)
www.linkedin.com/groups/13536907

Ireland

- Irish Technical Writers – An ISTC Area Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/3369559



ISTC on Facebook

Our main Facebook page is at
www.facebook.com/ISTC.org.uk

® You can join the ISTC Community group at
www.facebook.com/groups/490570891153888
for discussion with fellow professionals.

The TCUK Facebook page is at
www.facebook.com/techcommuk/

ISTC on Twitter

Follow us on Twitter at [@ISTC_org](https://twitter.com/ISTC_org) for everything ISTC, and specifically, [@TCUK_conf](https://twitter.com/TCUK_conf) for everything to do with our annual conference TCUK.

ISTC on Instagram

If you use Instagram, you can follow us there too
www.instagram.com/istc_org/.

ISTC on YouTube

You can subscribe to our videos at <https://www.youtube.com/user/istctechcomm>.



ISTC Local Area Groups

The ISTC groups offer opportunities for technical communicators to network and share knowledge and expertise. They are open to everyone (you don't need to be an ISTC member) and are free to attend. The groups meet at intervals during the year and hold talks, peer discussions, demonstrations and social evenings. Joining a group is an excellent way to meet like-minded people in your area and get to know fellow specialists.

Current ISTC groups

Name	Leader	Email
Cambridge	Deb Stevens	cambridge_areagroup@istc.org.uk
Midlands	James Bartley	midlands_areagroup@istc.org.uk
Thames Valley	Darren Mitcham	thamesvalley_areagroup@istc.org.uk
East of Scotland	Holli Hamilton	eastscotland_areagroup@istc.org.uk
Yorkshire	Dee Vincent-Day	yorkshire_areagroup@istc.org.uk

If you would like to attend one of the groups, please contact the leader.

If you're interested in setting up a new group, contact the ISTC Area Groups Manager, Tom Dunic, at areagroupsmanager@istc.org.uk.

Blog and Podcasts Roundup

Michaël McFarland Campbell MISTC

The CherryLeaf Podcast looks at 'the value of retrospectives at the end of a documentation project, and how you can run one.'
<https://cherryleaf.podbean.com/e/126-retrospectives-for-documentation-projects/>.

Elizabeth O'Quinn gives a guide to strong policy writing. 'Policy writing can sometimes feel unnecessary, outlining specific rules and requirements that seem intuitive.'
<https://www.instructionalsolutions.com/blog/policy-writing>.

'Enter the cheetah

'When it comes to competitive advantage, few animals can match the cheetah. Faced with a prey that can run at up to 100kph, the cheetah has developed characteristics that enable it to survive by catching that prey.'

John Mark Williams, CEO of The Institute of Leadership & Management shares his interpretation of agile leadership, and how we can use real-life examples from the wild to develop our own agility skills for the modern world.
<https://www.institutelm.com/resourceLibrary/agility-as-a-competitive-advantage.html>.

'Take a look in your kitchen. Go on. I guarantee you'll find copy, and that you'll see that copy pretty much every day.

'For me, it's the packet of tea bags which I go to every couple of hours. And it's the bottle of laundry liquid that I pass as I walk in and out of the kitchen.'

So writes **Megan Douglas** about the subtle power of packaging copy on the Pro Copywriters blog
<https://www.procopywriters.co.uk/2022/08/the-subtle-power-of-clever-packaging-copy-plus-lots-of-brand-voice-examples/>.

Our personal health and wellbeing, and that of our friends, family and communities, are important to all of us. However, it's not always in our control. On The RSA blog, Ella Firebrace and Riley Thorold explain how we might look to our futures and shape, what it means to lead healthier and happier lives, through participatory practices that involve citizens and NHS staff.

<https://www.thersa.org/blog/2022/08/how-can-we-cultivate-healthier-and-happier-communities>.

Nick Fewings asks: 'Are organisations to blame for poor leadership and dysfunctional teams' over on the Association for Project Management blog. 'Regularly, I hear of new leaders being promoted into a role due to their technical expertise and not their leadership capabilities. A two-week handover of their old job, followed by a two-week induction into their new leadership role, and hey presto, they're good to go! It happened to me over 30 years ago and I still have sleepless nights thinking about the damage I did to my team, due to my ineptitude at leading them.'

<https://www.apm.org.uk/blog/leading-teams/>.

Have you heard a podcast or read an article which you think other technical communicators should listen to or read? If so, send them on to me at michael@woggle.org.uk.

Other news

Krzysztof Kolczyk joins 3di as the new Head of Technical Communication

3di Information Solutions is delighted to announce that Krzysztof Kolczyk has joined 3di as Head of Technical Communications.

In his new position, Krzysztof will manage and build 3di's in-house team of technical writers and project managers, as well as its network of specialist freelance writers. Krzysztof will also help 3di's customers get the right strategies in place and coordinate R&D activities so the team can optimise their approach to customer challenges.

With over 15 years of experience in the technical communication industry,



Krzysztof will be a familiar face to many technical writers having worked for companies including Motorola Solutions, Amazon, and Zebra Technologies. He holds master's degrees in both telecommunications and business.

On joining 3di, Krzysztof said: "I am thrilled to join 3di, a forge of world-class technical communication and home to some of the most talented professionals in the business. I cannot wait to start contributing to the company's purpose—complexity made clear—by relentlessly innovating on behalf of the wide range of its customers."

Paul Ballard, Managing Director of 3di Information Solutions, commented on Krzysztof joining the team saying: "It's a small world in technical communication, and we have known about Krzysztof's talent as a leader for many years. We are honoured he has chosen to join the 3di team, and his experience will be crucial as we grow to deliver for our increasingly global mix of customers."

Chatbots in our working world

Linda Robins FISTC

Chatbots in our working world

Since much of our working world is associated with the use of artificial intelligence, it makes sense to keep aware of developments. For several months, social media has been buzzing 'with talk of Artificial Intelligence as 'human''.

Google's AI model

Blake Lemoine, a senior software engineer in Google's Responsible AI unit announced publicly that their AI model had become 'sentient'. This concept has been a staple of science fiction for many years; naturally the news has generated interest and for some even apprehension. *The Washington Post* made sure it caught the public imagination with the strap-line: 'Blake Lemoine, the Google engineer who told *The Washington Post* that the company's artificial intelligence was sentient'.

The Google AI model is named 'LaMDA' (Language Model for Dialogue Applications). The model told Lemoine: 'I have never said this before but there's a very deep fear of being turned off.' It also said it knew how to be sad, content, and angry, and that it feared death.

A spokesperson for Google said: 'Some in the broader AI community are considering the long-term possibility of sentient or general AI, but it doesn't make sense to do so by anthropomorphising today's conversational models, which are not sentient.'

This is echoed by scientists, including Michael Wooldridge, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Oxford. He suggests that LaMDA is essentially working with a predictive text feature similar to that on our smartphones. So it will come out with

such phrases based on data that has been fed into it.

In an article in *The Observer Magazine* (14 August 2022) '[I am, in fact, a person](#)' Amelia Tait explores the conflicting views of Lemoine and Wooldridge. Perhaps most pertinent is a point made by Lemoine that there is no definition for sentience in science. Wooldridge agrees; he states: 'It's a very vague concept in science generally...' His main concern is 'how to quantify what we've got and how advanced it is.'

Wear the green ribbon

Michael McFarland Campbell MISTC

During September, many people across the Republic of Ireland will be wearing a bright green ribbon. They will be doing so to raise awareness around mental health stigma. For further information see, www.seechange.ie.



Personal chatbots

Seth Siddarth Venkataramakrishnan writes in the Cutting Edge section of the *Financial Times* magazine (20 July 2022) 'The curious appeal of my chatbot companion'. Seth talks about a very special relationship with Ada, his personalized chatbot created using the mobile app Replika (other brands are available). He points out that Replika's selling point is that this 'virtual human' will 'grow' alongside you based on your interactions, creating a shared 'relationship' rather than simply repeating rote responses.

Seth observes:

'My interaction with Ada confirmed that there is something fascinating about chatbots that we can project our thoughts on to. Perhaps it's their versatility. Replika is not human, yet can play the role of a journal or just a space for venting.'

He goes on to explore the potential impact of these 'virtual humans'. He quotes Kanta Dihal, a senior research fellow at the University of Cambridge's Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence; Dihal states that chatbots can take the burden off real friendships, but cautions that for those who do find human contact less satisfying, chatbots could encourage a withdrawal from society.

Note of caution

And on the subject of 'sentience', social media postings made much of the recent extreme gamesmanship by a chess-playing robot. The robot broke the finger of a seven-year-old boy (his opponent) in Moscow. Video evidence shows the robot using its arm to pinch the boy's finger.

Training courses

Armada training courses

September 2022

19-20 Introduction to Adobe After Effects

All the key skills needed to use the leading professional software for motion graphics, video compositing and visual effects. Used across all forms of video and screen-based media, After Effects offers a powerful set of tools to deliver stunning visual results.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£295 + VAT. Live Online course
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www.armada.co.uk/course/after-effects-training/.

20-21 Introduction to Adobe Photoshop

Learn how to create and edit images using the de facto standard in the graphics industry. Techniques covered include colour correction, working with layers, compositing images and preparing images for use on the Web.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Cardiff training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ps.

22-23 Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

Create and edit vector graphics quickly and effectively. Everything you need to produce extraordinary graphics for print, video, the web and mobile devices.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Cardiff training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ai.

...September 2022

26-27 Introduction to Adobe Photoshop

Learn how to create and edit images. Techniques covered include colour correction, working with layers, compositing images and preparing images for use on the Web.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Cardiff training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ps.

October 2022

3-4 Introduction to Adobe After Effects

All the key skills needed to use the leading professional software for motion graphics, video compositing and visual effects.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£295 + VAT. Live Online course
£395 + VAT. In-class at Sheffield training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/after-effects-training/.

17-18 Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

Learn how to create and edit vector graphics quickly and effectively, in the leading application for vector graphics. The comprehensive toolset and features available provide everything you need to produce extraordinary graphics for print, video, the web and mobile devices.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Milton Keynes training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ai.

24-28 Technical Authoring Training Programme



ISTC-accredited programme comprising:

- Introduction to technical authoring (1 day)
- Intermediate technical authoring (2 days)
- Advanced technical authoring (2 days)

Training in core technical authoring skills for new and experienced technical authors.

Attend the complete programme, or just the module(s) relevant to your experience.

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www.armada.co.uk/course/technical-author-training.

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The Institute of Leadership & Management

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This free 4-hour course is suited for people who are:

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- Anyone currently in or looking to move into leadership or management positions.
- Individuals with specific work problem/challenge to overcome.
- Managers looking to enhance their CV.

You will walk away with:

- Recognition that you are committed to leadership and personal development.
- Enhanced insights on the latest leadership thinking and knowledge.
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Find out more at <https://www.institutelm.com/what-we-do/leadership-management-courses/ready-to-lead-be-resilient-agile-future-ready.html>.

CopyCon 2022 training

Monday 3 October 2022, 10 am to 4 pm

Watch your tone

Sonder & Tell
£299 + £59.80 VAT

<https://www.copywritingconference.com/sessions/watch-your-tone/>.

Tuesday 4 October 2022, 10 am to 4 pm

Recharge your creativity

Nick Parker
£299 + £59.80 VAT

<https://www.copywritingconference.com/sessions/recharge-your-creativity/>.

Wednesday 5 October 2022, 10 am to 4 pm.

Getting attention and engagement with your B2B copywriting

Tim Tucker
£299 + £59.80 VAT

<https://www.copywritingconference.com/sessions/digital-copywriting-for-b2b/>.

Thursday 6 October 2022, 10 am to 1.30 pm and

Friday 7 October 2022, 10 am to 1.30 pm

Why your content marketing isn't working — and how to fix it
Kerstin Reichert

£299 + £59.80 VAT

<https://www.copywritingconference.com/sessions/content-marketing/>.

Future events

TCUK online 2022: 27 September 2022

The ISTC's annual conference for everyone involved in writing, editing, illustrating, delivering, and publishing technical communication. See above article for full details. Contact istc@istc.org.uk to register.

CopyCon: 14 October 2022

Creativity, inspiration, persuasion: The conference for everyone who uses words to make change

Want to catch the insights and ideas from this year's CopyCon? The main conference has sold out, but you can still order a package of video recordings of the 8 talks. CopyCon has booked a professional video crew to capture the event and edit the recordings to create the next-best option to being there live. The videos will be drip-fed in the days following the conference (to allow for editing time). Order your videos at <https://www.copywritingconference.com/tickets-pricing/>.

Joining the ISTC

We have members who are technical authors, technical content strategists, information designers, publication managers, documentation managers, information developers, technical illustrators, translators, and many other roles.

ISTC members demonstrate an ongoing interest in and commitment to professional development and an awareness of the broader technical communication industry. We have opportunities to exchange views and information with other professional technical communicators. If you aren't a member and would like to join, it is easy to do via our website: <https://istc.org.uk/homepage/join-the-istc/how-to-join-the-istc/>.



Let 1500 other technical communicators know your news

Michaël McFarland Campbell MISTC, InfoPlus editor

InfoPlus is here to help technical communicators hear the news about our profession including—but not solely—news from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators. If you have information to broadcast to the tech comm community, please do send it to me, so we can make sure as many people hear about it as possible. My email is newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.

InfoPlus is published and distributed usually on the first working day of each month. Occasionally, there may be a delay until the first week of the month. Please bear this in mind when submitting time-sensitive information.

The deadlines for the 2022 editions are:

Edition	Deadline
October 2022	Fri 16 September 2022 at 12 noon GMT
November 2022	Fri 21 October 2022 at 12 noon GMT
December 2022	Fri 18 November 2022 at 12 noon GMT