



InfoPlus+

Monthly newsletter from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

April 2023

Contents	
ISTC Social Media	4
ISTC Local Area Groups	5
Training courses	5
Upcoming webinars	8
Tips and tricks	8

ISTC News

UK Technical Communication Awards

Communicating excellence

UK Technical Communication Awards 2023

Linda Robins FISTC, President

Just a reminder—no apologies for repeating this—that the closing date for UKTC Awards 2023 entries is 30 June 2023.

There are some rules to follow, so take a quick look at them before you nominate. Then [fill out the entry form](#)

to nominate yourself, your team, or someone else. Go on; you and your team deserve it!

If you need any help with your online submission, contact us at istc@istc.org.uk.

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.

Advertising:
istc@istc.org.uk

Editorial: [Michaël McFarland Campbell](#)

Layout Editor: [Bob Hewitt](#)

ISTC Office: Unit 19 Omega Business Village Thurston Road Northallerton, DL6 2NJ

Tel: +44 (0)20 8253 4506
Email: istc@istc.org.uk
Web: www.istc.org.uk

TCUK23 – Tickets and talks

This month's update for TCUK23 includes information about ticket sales, submitting proposals for the conference, and opportunities to play parts, both big and small, in shaping TCUK23.

TCUK23 will take place, live and in person, on 26 and 27 September 2023, at voco® St John's Hotel, Solihull.

For all TCUK news, FAQs, and to explore schedules and recordings of previous conferences, visit www.istc.org.uk/tcuk. Over the next couple of months, we will share more about what to expect at TCUK23.

Early-bird tickets for TCUK23

All-inclusive early-bird tickets for TCUK23 will be available from early May to mid-June. More details will be published closer to the time.

Standard early-bird: £800
ISTC Members & Business Affiliates* early-bird: £650

Call for papers in April

Are you interested in speaking or running a workshop at TCUK23? We are open for submissions from the first week of April – watch out for an email with more details.

Thank you to everyone who has provided feedback on what they want to see at the conference. Our [discussion groups](#) are still open for ISTC Members, and non-members are welcome to continue to contact us with suggestions via tcuk@istc.org.uk.

We want to provide a mix of generalised and specialist information across the full spectrum of technical communication. We want to hear from you if you have skills, knowledge, or experience that others could benefit from.

For example, we know people are interested in finding out about bid writing, user research, API documentation, and the relationship between tech comms and UX. Equally, perennial subjects like preparing for retirement, career progression, best practice, resources and tools, and insight

into new and upcoming developments are always of interest.

Until submissions are open, the website contains a wealth of examples of previous talks and [guidance on preparing to submit and give a presentation](#).

Opportunities with TCUK23

Helping to prepare a conference requires a mixture of skills. ISTC Members are invited to participate in preparations, and not just for the warm glow of helping our fantastic community come together.

Whether you would like to add to your portfolio of public-facing work, have opportunities to connect meaningfully with renowned speakers, or help shape the conversation in our industry, there are many benefits to getting involved.

By the time you read this, we will be looking for people to join the Content Committee: the website will have all the details.

Unable to commit to anything now? You can join our online portal, where individual requests for involvement are posted. As a volunteer-run organisation, we understand how availability can fluctuate. Tasks range in

*Business Affiliates get some discounted tickets depending on their selected package. See <https://istc.org.uk/homepage/business-affiliates/how-to-become-a-business-affiliate/> for more information.

size and time commitment, and there's no minimum obligation.

For all opportunities, email us at tcuk@istc.org.uk and we'll gladly provide all the information and support you need to get involved at whatever level you can.

Coming up next

We are developing new ways for our sponsors to get involved with the conference and our community. If you are interested in how sponsorship might support your business, write to us at tcuk@istc.org.uk.



ISTC meets Michael J. Metts and Andy Welfle

Monday 17 April 2023, 12–1 pm GMT

<https://istc.org.uk/events/istc-meets>.

Writing is designing: use words to build better experiences

Without words, apps would be an unusable jumble of shapes and icons, while voice interfaces and chatbots wouldn't even exist. Words make digital experiences human-centred and require as much thought as branding and code. See how interfaces rely on language, and learn principles for UX writing that anyone working on digital products can apply to their work.

About the presenters

Andy Welfle

When Andy was eight, he wanted to be a poet and a palaeontologist. Twenty-seven years later, he is neither but uses those skills in his day job as a content strategist on Adobe's product design team—writing under huge constraints and uncovering artefacts from big, old software interfaces. When he's not working, he's creating podcasts and zines about one of his favourite topics: wooden pencils. Find him in San Francisco with his wife and two very large cats, or online at andy.wtf.

Michael J. Metts

Michael J. Metts helps teams build great products and services by putting people first. With a background in journalism, he frequently finds himself talking about the role words play in designing useful, usable digital products. He has given talks and

taught workshops at industry conferences around the world. He lives with his wife, two children, and a very small dog just outside Chicago.

Volunteers needed for 'ISTC Meets...'

If you've enjoyed ISTC Meets, why not volunteer with us?

It's a great way to learn new skills, help the community and meet some leading thinkers in our industry.

We're especially looking for people to

- Act as host on the day, introducing the speakers and making sure everything runs smoothly.
- Edit and upload the recordings after each session.

You'll work with existing volunteers and you'll be fully supported in any areas that are new to you.

If you'd like to be involved, give us a shout at meets@istc.org.uk.

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

Contact the group leader if you want to attend one of the groups. Want to set up a new group? Contact Tom Dumic, our Area Groups Manager at areagroupsmanager@istc.org.uk.

Training courses

Armada



April 2023

11-12 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).

£295 + VAT. Instructor led, live online course

£345 + VAT. In-class at Bromsgrove training centre

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

13-14 Introduction to Adobe After Effects

Teaches 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).

£345 + VAT. Live Online course

£395 + VAT. In-class at our Bromsgrove training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ae.

...April 2023

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 Sheffield training centre

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

27-28 Introduction to Adobe InDesign

Provides a comprehensive introduction to the powerful capabilities of InDesign's most popular features.

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

£295 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Reading training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/id.

May 2023

2-3 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).

£295 + VAT. Instructor led, live online course

£345 + VAT. In-class at Sheffield training centre

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

9-10 Introduction to Adobe After Effects

Teaches 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).

£345 + VAT. Instructor led, live online course

£395 + VAT. In-class at our Reading training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ae.

15-16 Introduction to Adobe InDesign

Provides a comprehensive introduction to the powerful capabilities of InDesign's most popular features.

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

£295 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Bristol training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/id.

22-23 Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

Learn how to create and edit vector graphics quickly and effectively, in the leading application for vector graphics.

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

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

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

Follow us: [@ArmadaTraining](https://twitter.com/ArmadaTraining)

Cherryleaf

ACCREDITED
TRAINING
COURSE



Technical Author/Technical Writer/
technical writing e-learning course

<https://www.cherryleaf.com/training/technical-author-basicinduction-training-course/>.

Learn to write like a professional technical communicator. This course teaches you the fundamentals of technical writing, and helps you understand your role as a Technical Author (or similar position).

This technical communication course is accredited by the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators.

New two course bundles

We offer five bundle options that contain two courses at a discounted price:

- [Technical Writing & Screenshots Course Bundle](#)
- [Technical Writing & UI Text Course Bundle](#)
- [Technical Writing & User Onboarding Course Bundle](#)
- [Technical Writing & Copywriting Course Bundle](#)

ESTON Training

Technical/Commercial Authorship
(Former ISTC Syllabus
Parts 1 & 2):
<http://www.estontrg.com/technicalcommercial-authorship/>. A £50 discount is offered to ISTC members for this course.

Simplified English:
<http://www.estontrg.com/english-language-courses/>.

Standard Generalised Mark-up Language (SGML):
<http://www.estontrg.com/standard-generalised-mark-language-sgml-course/>.

Editing and Publishing Magazines:
<http://www.estontrg.com/editing-publishing-magazine-course/>.

Report Writing:
<http://www.estontrg.com/report-writing-course/>.

Business English:
<http://www.estontrg.com/business-english-course/>.

Firehead

Learn FrameMaker 2019:
<https://firehead.net/course/framemaker-2019-training-technical-authors/>.

Learn Adaptive Content Modelling:
<http://firehead.net/training/learn-adaptive-content-modelling/>.

Creating Mobile Apps without Coding:
<http://firehead.net/training/creating-mobile-apps-without-coding/>.

Customer Journey Mapping:
<http://firehead.net/training/customer-journey-mapping/>.

MadCap Software

For details of the latest MadCap Software training schedule (both on-site and online) visit: www.madcapsoftware.com/services/training/.

Free technical writing courses

Some free technical writing courses submitted
by Mike Mee

<https://developers.google.com/tech-writing/overview>.

<https://www.udemy.com/course/technical-writing-a-quick-start-to-software-documentation/>.

<https://github.com/wise4rmgod/TechnicalWriterResources>.

<https://iimskills.com/a-guide-on-technical-writing-and-technical-writing-training/>.

<https://iimskills.com/a-guide-on-technical-writing-and-technical-writing-training/>.

Upcoming webinars

Let's talk content ops

ISTC Honorary Fellow, Rahel Baillie, hosts some webinars talking about things that are of interest to technical communicators.

Webinars include:

- ▶ ContentOps as Part of Product Lifecycle Management
- ▶ Let's Talk Content Operations
- ▶ Growing a Customer Support Site Into a ContentOps Pipeline
- ▶ Turning Team Pains into Operational Gains

Find out more at:

<https://www.brighttalk.com/search/?q=Let's+Talk+ContentOps>.

If you know of a webinar that will be of interest to readers, please email newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.

Tips and tricks

Succeed with a smile

Linda Robins FISTC

A recent leading article in The Times (“[Ear to ear](#)”, 6 March 2023) offered encouragement to job hunters by citing results of research into the effect of a smile. Researchers in North America showed that smiling applicants are more likely to be successful than those who keep a straight face. Smiling may be more complex than it sounds and may only take you to first base, but it is something you have control over!

The brief to working professionals was to rate the suitability of 280 people for a job as a sales manager. The candidates who smiled in the photo provided with their LinkedIn profile rated ‘more hireable’ than those who did not. In a subsequent experiment, prospective employers selected interview candidates; ‘the smilers again came out on top. The effect was even more pronounced when asked to make a snap judgement.

There are a few notes of caution, including the need to be (or at least appear to be) spontaneous in a photo and in real life or on video if you get to the interview; plus, of course, you need to back up your

appearance with substance in showing suitability for a role. But it can be a good start!

How to write compelling copy (that sells)

Cecile Conradson, Senior Copywriter, Hyped Marketing

No matter your line of business, you'll need to create engaging copy — the words you use to promote your services online.

Whether you're trying to catch the attention of passers-by with a poster, convert leads into customers with your website or improve your ranking on Google, your written content should represent your brand and help you stand out from the competition.

But writing 'good' copy isn't just about airtight spelling and grammar. A lot goes into producing something that adds value for you and your audience — from defining your tone of voice (TOV) to finding relevant SEO keywords.

So, where to begin?

A crash course in copywriting

With the market already saturated with bespoke marketing campaigns and trending

content, you've got to make every word count.

When done right, your written content can generate engagement from your target audience, leading to click-throughs and site visits that'll (hopefully) turn into enquiries or purchases. Alternatively, poor-quality copy can confuse your audience and drive away potential customers.

There's no magic formula for writing compelling copy (we're looking at you, ChatGPT...), but there are best practices you can follow to help you nail your niche. Here's what you need to focus on to make sure your content performs...

Consistency

One of our top copywriting tips is this: when it comes to copy, consistency is key.

Will you use contractions? Do you want to come across as helpful and friendly or corporate and high-end? Creating a recognisable TOV and deploying it across all your content — from social media posts to brochures — is one of the easiest ways to guarantee your business stands out.

Additionally, your copy should always live up to high standards to make a positive impression on your audience. Failing to do a

thorough quality check can leave inconsistencies in your messaging and lead to some pretty distracting — although admittedly sometimes hilarious — typos. (Who remembers the Pringles 'multigran' incident?)

Audience

News flash: just because you find something interesting doesn't mean your customers will. No matter what you're writing, always keep the reader in mind.

Are you talking to your audience in a way that they'll understand and providing them with the information they're looking for? Is the content you're writing suitable for the platform you're posting on, or might it perform better in a different format?

Remember, what works for one audience might not work for another — don't waste time barking up the wrong tree!

Purpose

A copywriter's job is to evoke a reaction from their audience with the content they publish — from blogs and flyers to press releases and emails. So, to ensure you achieve the response you're hoping for, it's crucial to keep the purpose of your writing in mind at all times.

Are you aiming to inform, persuade or entertain? Determining this will make a big difference to how you write and the language you use.

Research

Keeping up with the latest trends can be a little overwhelming, but ensuring your content is appropriate, original and topical will help you appear in the right searches and provide the most valuable insights for your audience.

You should also conduct keyword research when writing blogs and website pages. Including relevant keywords with a good balance of significant search volume and moderate difficulty will boost your search engine optimisation (SEO) ranking, bumping you up on Google's results pages.

Plus, adding relevant hashtags to your social media posts can allow you to reach more of your target audience with the content you share.

Planning

Never skip the plan. Whether you're working on an article for PR or writing copy for a website, having a strategy in place can help ensure your writing doesn't go off on a tangent and disengage the reader.

If you're writing long-form copy, work out a content plan that ensures each point flows into the next. Nailing the structure of your writing can be one of the trickiest things to get right, but it's crucial for making your content interesting to read and easy to understand.

Try to break up long bits of text into shorter, more manageable paragraphs. Not only will this make your writing more readable, but it's also important for SEO; Google is likely to penalise a page with sections that are too long. The more you know...

Call to action

Struggling to convert page visits to sales? Your promotional content is probably missing a clear call to action (CTA).

In today's marketing landscape, it's becoming increasingly difficult to capture the attention of your ideal customer as they scroll past countless ads every day. So, you need to ensure everything you're producing has a strong CTA that points the reader towards their next steps.

Often, less is more. Including simple buttons, snappy headlines and bold text can clarify the main message behind all your marketing activities and ensure you have the best chance of success.

Chat GPT is everywhere

Linda Robins FISTC

No current topic is covered so widely in scientific, technical and mainstream media as the seemingly wondrous properties of the latest AI language processing models. ChatGPT is the most prominent and for which the most significant claims are made.

AI language processing models, specifically ChatGPT, are featured prominently in scientific, technical, and mainstream media. You will know the claims that the tools will write your article, paper, blog, or essay for you. 'Next-token prediction' used by the models gives results similar to human intelligence. So the results are beguiling. However, this is to disregard the importance of the vital component: original thought.

Academic institutions are scrambling to veto the use of ChatGPT by students for fear of plagiarism. A report in the *i* newspaper (['Oxford and Cambridge ban ChatGPT over plagiarism fears but other universities choose to embrace AI bot'](#) by Poppy Wood, 2 March 2023) identified eight of the 24 elite universities in the UK have banned the use of ChatGPT in assignments; 'to do so would count as 'academic misconduct'. Up to 40% of universities have imposed a ban. Other

institutions are considering how to frame their policies.

Some universities are exploring how students could use ChatGPT. The reporter noted the approach of the staff at the University of Glasgow, who are considering how best to use large language models responsibly in their studies. Also, University College London is guiding students in using ChatGPT to save time on bibliographies, acknowledgements, and references, which seems to be an enlightened and positive approach. The tool can eliminate hours spent at the start of a project searching for reference material and following up on references (provided you provide the correct parameters).

Usage will adapt as these tools develop. At present, there are conflicting views. For example, the UK Civil Service has banned the use of ChatGPT to write Government policies or correspondence. The International Baccalaureate (IB) policy is to allow schoolchildren to use the chatbot in their essays.



Let other technical communicators know your news

Michael McFarland Campbell MISTC

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 for the tech comm community, please do send it to me, so we can make sure as many people hear about it as soon as possible. My email is newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.

InfoPlus is published and distributed usually on the first working day of each month. Please bear this in mind when submitting time-sensitive information.

The deadlines for the 2023 editions are:

Edition	Deadline
May 2023	Fri 21 April 2023 at 12 noon BST
June 2023	Fri 19 May 2023 at 12 noon BST
July 2023	Fri 23 June 2023 at 12 noon BST
August 2023	Fri 21 July 2023 at 12 noon BST
September 2023	Fri 18 August 2023 at 12 noon BST
October 2023	Fri 22 September 2023 at 12 noon BST
November 2023	Fri 20 October 2023 at 12 noon BST
December 2023	Fri 17 November 2023 at 12 noon GMT

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 istc@istc.org.uk for further details!