



InfoPlus+

Monthly newsletter from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

September 2023

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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



It's the beginning of the month where the ISTC's TCUK conference takes place in Solihull between 26 and 27 of the month. I hope that everyone who attends gets fired up about technical communication and letting other technical and scientific communicators know what you are up to in your sphere. If you have something to say to others, please do send it into me.

InfoPlus can only be as good as the information sent into me in advance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Michaël

newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.

ISTC News

UKTC Awards

Linda Robins FISTC

UK Technical Communication Awards

Communicating excellence

Technical Documentation Awards

Judging for the technical documentation element of UKTC Awards is now complete. The Awards will be presented at TCUK23 at the celebration dinner.

Professional Awards

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

■ Horace Hockley Award

The Horace Hockley Award is 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

The Mike Austin Award is 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.

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 Chantel Sankey at istc@istc.org.uk.

Training courses

Armada

September 2023

4-5 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. Instructor led, live online course

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

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

11-15 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.

This course is now hosted by Matthew Ellison.

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

£1,195 + VAT. Instructor led, live online course

£1,495 + VAT In-class at Bristol training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/tatp.

ACCREDITED
TRAINING
COURSE



...September 2023

18-19 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).

£295 + VAT. Instructor led, live online course

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

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

October 2023

2-3 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. Instructor led, live online course

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

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

9-10 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 Cardiff training centre

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

23-24 Introduction to Adobe InDesign

Provides a comprehensive introduction to the powerful capabilities of InDesign, including setting up new documents, shapes, frames and using InDesign's most popular features.

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

£295 + VAT. Instructor led, live online course

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

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

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



Cherryleaf

New course from Cherryleaf

Using Generative AI in technical writing

This online course covers how technical communicators can use Generative Artificial Intelligence to help them:

- Be more efficient
- Create better deliverables for their users

We went through all the key stages in a technical writing project. At each step, we investigated whether AI tools like ChatGPT and Claude could make a Technical Writer's job easier and better. After a lot of research and testing, we ended up with the content for this course.

The course provides a framework that attendees can use to identify opportunities and best practices for integrating ChatGPT, Claude, LLaMA, and similar tools into their technical authoring processes – creating, managing, and delivering technical content.

Find out more at

<https://www.cherryleaf.com/training-courses/using-generative-ai-in-technical-writing-training-course/>.

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

An Introduction to Content Operations

<https://firehead-training.net/course/an-introduction-to-content-operations>.

Creating user onboarding content

<https://firehead-training.net/course/creating-user-onboarding-content>.

Creating Screenshots and Images for User Guides

<https://firehead-training.net/course/creating-screenshots-and-images-for-user-guides>.

DITA concepts

<https://firehead-training.net/course/dita-concepts>.

Introduction to Content Design

<https://firehead-training.net/course/content-design>.

Specifications for Technical Communicators

<https://firehead-training.net/course/specifications-for-technical-communicators>.

Fundamentals of modern technical communication

<https://firehead-training.net/course/technical-communication-fundamentals-1>.

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/>.

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>.



Plain English Campaign: access to clear and concise information

Linda Robins FISTC

Recently I have been reviewing material which demonstrates the value of clear and concise information in part by showing how it should not be done. This took me back the

Plain English Campaign and their wealth of 'before and after' examples.

The Plain English Campaign was founded in 1979, to combat 'the gobbledygook, jargon and misleading public information' evident in the formal output of so many government departments and other official organisations. The campaign was founded on the belief that 'everyone should have access to clear and concise information'.

The campaign officially began after founder, Chrissie Maher OBE, publicly shredded hundreds of official documents in Parliament Square, London. In 1990 the campaign went on to introduce its own Crystal Mark of approval, which now appears on more than 24,000 documents worldwide.

The Plain English website offers a selection of guides for personal use, subject to the usual rules of copyrighted material. Links to a selection are given below (including some examples of 'bad' writing with suggestions for improvement).

<https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>.

<https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/how-to-write-in-plain-english.html>

<https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/campaigning/examples/before-and-after.html>.

<https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/the-a-z-of-alternative-words.html>.

National Manufacturing Day



Thursday, 28th September 2023 is National Manufacturing Day (NMD). NMD is a day when companies open their doors to showcase a range of highly skilled jobs. Organised by Make UK, with employers pledging their involvement on the event website, it looks a really exciting day.

Find out more at <https://www.nationalmanufacturingday.org>.

The right to disconnect

Linda Robins FISTC

August seems a good month to consider a hot topic in employment law, namely 'the right to disconnect'. If you find yourself scrolling through emails while lounging poolside or taking a break on a mountain peak, this is for you. In recent years technology has made it possible (in fact, easy); and many a keen worker has been

seduced into being accessible and active round the clock and regardless of weekends and holidays. You'll have seen and maybe used the out of office message, "I am on leave for two weeks but will be checking my emails regularly" (or similar). This applies to the not-so-keen too when peer pressure comes into play. Do you want to be known as a lightweight, who chooses to walk away from the workplace out of hours and while on leave?

I am firmly in the pro-work-life balance camp and am interested in the prospect of legislation in the UK to help this along. In recent years, a range of countries worldwide have brought in rules to allow employees to ignore technology when not 'at work' or on call. Closest to home is Ireland where legislation was introduced in 2021. No high-profile court cases have resulted so it may be the effect is more subtle. It is common now for emails there to include the rider, "This message is not urgent. I won't answer this message out of hours, and I don't expect you to either." or similar.

Of course, the situation is not as clear cut. There is always urgency of the information exchange and the need to take recipients' time zones into account. But legislation would at least allow the subject to be addressed.

Upcoming Events

TCUK 26 – 27 September 2023

TCUK, or Technical Communication UK, is the ISTC's annual conference for everyone involved in writing, editing, illustrating, delivering and publishing technical information. <https://istc.org.uk/tcuk>.

Product Design Week London 13 – 17 November 2023

Tech Circus are specialists in UX and Product Design Week includes a UX writing day. A discount of 15% is offered to ISTC members. Use code ISTC15.

For more info see <https://techcircus.io/en/events/product-design-week-london>.

tcworld conference 2023, 14 – 16 November, Stuttgart.

Registration for the tcworld conference 2023 is now open. With more than 200 presentations in German and English, this event draws professionals from technical communication and related fields from across the world. The tekomp fair will play host to additional technical presentations, meetups, and showcase sessions as well as the careerHUB and

Arena. Renowned exhibitors will reveal their latest developments in their own showrooms.

This is your opportunity to expand your knowledge, to network, and to exchange ideas with colleagues and experts!

For great discounts, don't miss the early bird deadline on 17 October, 2023.



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.

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Contact istc@istc.org.uk for further details!

Please bear this in mind when submitting time-sensitive information.

The deadlines for the 2023 editions are:

| Edition | Deadline |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| 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 |