

President's View

Looking back, looking forward



2025 has been a year of challenges for the people who volunteer behind the scenes at the ISTC. I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every member who has given their time, enthusiasm, and care to all the different works that we do as an organisation.

As we enter the last quarter of the year, it's common to begin to reflect on the past year and plan for the next one – and I'm certainly in that mood as I sit to write to you here.

In particular, I've spent a lot of time these past months thinking about the

role of professional bodies in 2025 and beyond. We have a rich legacy of over 50 years of work supporting our members. Now we are faced with extending that legacy while adapting to the new and ever-changing world of work we are now in.

I'm also reflecting on why I joined the ISTC in the first place. I remember feeling isolated and uncertain, working from home as a freelance technical editor, wanting to find reliable information about how to make sure I was doing good work for my clients. At the same time, I was looking for opportunities to learn from and interact with people who understood why I cared so much about getting the words just right for the person reading them.

From the merging of these two streams of thought, I believe it is the context that is changing more than the day-to-day challenges. There is a continuity to our needs, even when such impactful change as generative AI comes to the workplace. We still need to know that we're in step with the wider community, we still need to be able to demonstrate our professional competency and commitment, we still need to pick each other's brains and share our stories.

What is changing, is the way we do these things. Social media has been around for some two decades now, and we've seen the way we interact online

shift and change as a result of global health issues, economics, politics, and technology. How we apply for jobs, seek new clients, and produce our work are all being impacted, but the underlying work continues to be necessary and valuable.

That foundation of consistency provides me with a sense of comfort, but there is no space for complacency. We have new tools to learn, alongside the perennial need to demonstrate the value of our profession in the face of pressure to save costs. Practising the skills required to achieve this while also producing good work with fewer resources is a challenge many of us experience. I think that the ISTC can support you to do this.

We offer a wide range of ways to meet members' needs, but in our busy lives we don't always remember the support that is already out there.

For example, if you want personalised feedback on your work, here are some of the options available to you.

- We have an updated mentoring scheme open to all members, get on the waiting list for the next session. [<https://istc.org.uk/professional-development-and-recognition/mentoring-scheme/>]
- Write an article for Communicator or the IJTC and seek responses from readers. [<https://www.ijtc.net/guidelines/>]

- Submit your CPD records for review, and seek feedback on your professional development. [<https://istc.org.uk/professional-development-and-recognition/continuing-professional-development/>]
- Prepare an entry for next year's UK Tech Comm awards and receive feedback from the judges. [<https://istc.org.uk/professional-development-and-recognition/uk-technical-communication-awards/>]
- Give a presentation through ISTC Meets or TCUK and get direct interaction with attendees. [<https://istc.org.uk/events/istc-meets/>]
- Or, attend an area group meeting (some are online if you're not nearby) and exchange feedback with peers. [<https://istc.org.uk/our-community/area-groups-2/>]

But if you want something more than even all of that offers you, I have one key suggestion. If you want to build relationships with other members, address meaningful issues, receive on-going support, and come away feeling like you really got the most out of being an ISTC member, then I would highly recommend joining one or more of the teams that make up the ISTC. Options exist from the lightest of commitments, to the highest levels of governance. All will bring you further into a community of fellow technical communicators who are keen to support each other and help you achieve your goals.

An individual journey, a communal path

Our profession can be a lonely one. Even when working in an office, it is common to find technical communicators in sole positions within a company. This can attract people who are highly independent and self-reliant. We may write instructions, but we may not often read them, preferring to work things out for ourselves. This is what we do for work every day after all, tackle complex information and wrangle it into something that can be understood by ourselves and then by others.

I'm not here to tell you that's wrong, I think this is a great thing – I am a technical communicator too. What I know, however, is that this autonomy and agency comes with a responsibility

– to look after ourselves, to trust ourselves, to be mindful of the pitfalls of our mindsets.

Everybody needs time to be fed by the ideas of others, to share their concerns, to be validated by others who understand them. That's why I think the ISTC is such a powerful force for good in our profession. It supports not only the traditional training, professional development, and information sharing you would expect, but also provides a social experience that is so crucial for those in our field. Whether you consider its value in terms of mental health, or just having a place to vent, being a part of communal spaces with like-minded people can make a huge difference to our capacity and resilience.

One prime example is our TCUK conference. It is intentionally focused on both providing high-quality information for delegates and facilitating conversation between fellow professionals. In a world where so much interaction is online, it's an important example of how we offer the profession spaces to meaningfully connect. This year's conference is taking place in November if this speaks to you. [<https://www.istc.org.uk/tcuk/>]

TCUK isn't the only way to connect, of course. How we engage with our community is up to us as individuals. Every member's path is unique; what does yours look like?

This is not just a rhetorical question, I'm keen to hear from members about how they are solving the problems they face and how the ISTC plays a role in that. However, it may be that you look at the ISTC and don't see quite what you need, you don't see the path you want laid out. And you probably already know what I'm going to write next.

Let's use our tenacity, independence, comfort with complexity, and communication skills to build the tools and community that we need, together. We may be used to working alone, but some things cannot be done by one person, and building a network of support can only be done as a team.

This doesn't just mean working within the ISTC. It could look like sharing the job postings you find with the community. Perhaps for you it means starting conversations, attending meet-ups, or sharing your thoughts; in short, being engaged.

Everyone has a role to play, and everyone can contribute. Yes, even you. Feel free to finish reading this journal first; be inspired, be frustrated, be enlivened by others in our profession. Then, share some of your thoughts with others.

Get in touch

Not sure where to start? Send me an email. I'd love to hear from you, but I'd love even more to share with you the different ways you can connect with others in our community. You can reach me at president@istc.org.uk. ■

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