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connex**ions interviews**

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From the editors

A MORE COMPLETE EXPERIENCE

Revisiting Digital Production as *connexions*

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connexions issue 2.1 reflects a move toward greater teamwork on a publication now led by coeditors Rosário Durão and Kyle Mattson. As the editorial *we* of *connexions*, we seek dynamic focus in international professional communication, including a richer multimedia experience for our readers. Thus, we draw on our strengths of published peer-reviewed articles and add to it *connexions* Interviews, a new section of the journal. In collaborative spirit, we continue to rely on an editorial board that has helped *connexions* publish on emerging trends in the field and offer groundbreaking understandings of established theories and perspectives of international professional communication.

The inaugural section—*connexions* Interviews—is really an event for us! It represents a collaborative first with Quan Zhou, one of our two new section editors. Together, Quan Zhou and Han Yu will continue to interview, on recorded video chat, many IPC practitioners and scholars of note. In this first issue, we are indeed proud of our interviews with these leaders from across industry and academia in the world: Scott Abel, Kit Brown-Hoekstra, Ricardo Muñoz Martín, Anne Surma, and Kim Yangsook.

This issue represents a first effort, one we sense our readers will value—particularly for its professional, yet vibrantly raw portrait of the workaday worlds of industry leaders and scholars from across the world. In so doing, it reveals what has been left unattended across the scholarly publications of international and intercultural professional and technical communication practice; namely, an integration of sorts.

While print-friendly digital distribution formats have been well served, digital video has too long been overlooked in the publishing quarters many of our ilk visit. The availability of inexpensive screen recording technologies and video chat options, alongside our commitment to transcribe videos, means we can integrate digital video and print-friendly digital content in meaningful ways. In short, valuable articles alongside recorded and transcribed f2f video interviews of leaders of industry and academia helps set us apart.

Adding to this issue's Research Articles, Grinnell and Hill see value in technical communicators engaging communities of skilled amateurs, whose contributions need not be seen as a zero-sum game for technical communicators working toward professionalizing practice. Instead, they argue, technical communicators should value futures where TC professionals manage the worthwhile contributions of knowledgeable amateurs. In research quite timely in this year of centenary events about "the Great War," Leasum Orwig historicizes the format conventions of certain WWI battlefield reports and memos, arguing that new genres emerged as conditions of war—including a more cohesive administrative history of prior communication practices—took root as organizational memory.

Contributing to *connexions'* Focused Commentary and Industry Perspectives, Ludwig's article weighs advanced social media skills of today's most recent generation of students against that generation's apparent lack of critical thought about how students' online lives often inhibit future career success. Thus, Ludwig identifies avenues for teachers to increase students' awareness of how social media skills can work for, not against, potential career goals. The issue's Teaching Cases includes Mitchell's study of metaphor as vehicle for ESL teachers to help their ESL students build linguistic connections between first and second languages. Findings conveyed emerge from data collected from surveys completed by participating teachers and students. Rounding out the articles and placed in the Literature Review section, Brumberger's article reviews the literature on visual communication, drawing numerous perspectives into a single resource for readers interested in the ways visual communication practices and IPC intersect. Importantly, Mitchell and Brumberger bring published perspectives that, together, portray spoken and visual expression as quite relevant to successful IPC. Enjoy the issue!

Research articles

FOUR PARADIGM SHIFTS AND A FUNERAL

The Demise and Rise of the TC Profession in the Wake of Web 2.0

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Any exploration of professionalism with regard to professional communication must involve the broader context and scrutiny of the status and significance of *professions* within industrialized societies. Here we find four shifting paradigms in which previous models of communication, technology, and economics collide with newer ones. This article explores those paradigm shifts and their significance to professionalization in technical communication. We argue that, within globalized, technologically-enhanced societies, the place of the technical communicator is problematized, even compromised, by *create and share* tools of Web 2.0. We discuss four paradigm shifts impacting the role of technical communicators as professionals:

--*Shift #1*. Production of information: From producers to consumers to *prosumers*

--*Shift #2*. Flow of information: From broadcast to network.

--*Shift #3*. Mediation of information: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 to Web 3.0.

--*Shift #4*. Locales of information: From local to global/from private to public.

Keywords. Professional communication, Professionalization, Web 2.0, Web 3.0, Wikis, Twitter, Facebook, Cloud computing, Prosumers, Consumers, Amateurs, Read/write Web.

> *The king is dead;*
> *Long live the king.*

What lies ahead for the profession of technical communication (TC) in the era of Web 2.0 technologies? How will technical communicators distinguish themselves from *amateur* document producers, those who readily use Web 2.0 technologies for
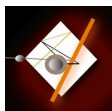
production and sharing? As the job market shifts to utilize lower cost, part-time employees, how will Web 2.0 technologies, available to anyone who can use them to make and distribute documents, affect the profession of technical communication? These questions are on our minds as we attempt to prepare TC students for a profession that is rapidly changing. Such questions must be discussed if we are to understand the possibilities for the future of technical communication as a profession and if the pedagogy is to do its job, preparing students for the field.

What exactly is Web 2.0? The term was officially coined in 2004 by Dale Dougherty, a vice-president of O'Reilly Media Inc., who identified key elements of internet technologies that make up this trend: enhanced user participation and movement away from mere user of Web content—downloading things from the internet—to contributor and sharer of content on the Web. Web 2.0 is the plethora of tools harnessing the power of the crowd, and creating rich user experiences in social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis and blogs. Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube are channels where everybody's talking, producing and consuming content. Web 2.0 has changed the Internet and is impacting the field of technical communication.

While Web 2.0 technologies are not the only driver of change, we find their role significant enough to be brought into the conversation about change in the professionalization of our field. Thus, our study first reviews and contextualizes current literature concerning the professionalization of technical communication, especially as much recent literature calls for changes in the way technical communication identifies and promotes itself as a profession. Then, our study shifts to a cultural analysis of the profession, as we believe that any exploration of professionalism in our field must involve the broader context and scrutiny of the status and significance of professions within industrialized societies. We identify four shifting paradigms in the culture of communication and discuss their significance to the professionalization of technical communication.

This article argues that within globalized, technologically-enhanced societies, the place of the technical communicator is problematized, even compromised, by create and share tools of Web 2.0. What will be the result of this compromise, only time will tell. We do not profess to have all of the answers, but we do attempt to construct some understanding of the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the profession of technical

communication. The article suggests ways that the profession might proceed, how it might reposition its identity and value, and create a new space of professionalization within shifting paradigms. We envision a space in which professional technical communicators reposition themselves in relation to Web 2.0 technologies as knowledge managers who will likely work with experienced users of Web 2.0 tools—both in-house and freelance—users who function as document producers. Such repositioning acknowledges trained technical communicators in their roles as decision-makers and managers, roles in which their expertise as knowledge creators—synthesizers of data into knowledge—and communication facilitators is valued and recognized. Thus, technical communicators differentiate themselves from the plethora of Web 2.0 amateur and semi-amateur document producers, those workers who stand to become a greater presence in technical communication, as they surely already are.

Such a move builds on the line of thinking among TC scholars, researchers and professionals who already acknowledge the more expansive function of technical communication beyond document production (Anschuetz & Rosenbaum, 2002; Faber & Johnson-Eilola, 2002; Mirel & Spilka, 2002; Slattery, 2007). This repositioning of the profession may require a funeral, that is, letting some old ideologies die in order to see the profession rise again in a new shape, one not uninfluenced by the old, but certainly one taking on a life of its own in the current multi-stage theater of information management, knowledge production, and document dissemination.

In this expansive vision of the profession, an economic term called The Long Tail deserves some attention. In a 2004 article in *Wired* magazine, Chris Anderson describes the effects of The Long Tail on current and future business models (in 2006 he published *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*). The concept involves frequency distribution, and has been studied by statisticians since at least the late 1940s. In essence, the low distribution and inventory costs of businesses like Amazon.com, eBay.com and Netflix allow them to realize significant profit by selling small volumes of many products to many customers, instead of selling large volumes of a few popular items like traditional brick and mortar stores. Web 2.0 consumers who shop at Amazon.com, where they have influence over things like choice and price, is the customer demographic called The Long Tail.

Given a large population of customers, substantial choice, and negligible stocking and distribution costs (typical of Amazon.com and Netflix), businesses will see the buying pattern of people create a power law distribution curve, or Pareto distribution, as in Fig. 1. The Long Tail suggests that high freedom of choice will create a certain degree of inequality. The head will be comprised of the traditional brick and mortar business model—i.e., selling lots of a few items—whereas the long tail will expand with the Web 2.0 environment to offer even more freedom of choice and potential for profit.

Figure 1

The Long Tail in general business environments

Source: http://www.longtail.com/about.html
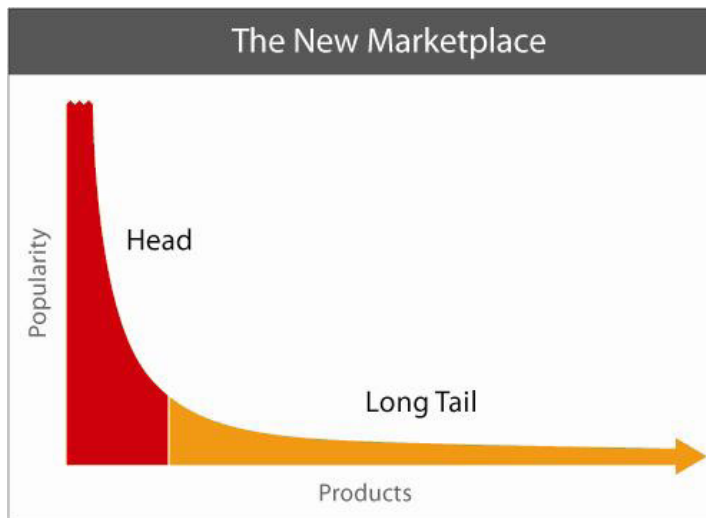
If we think of technical communication in terms of The Long Tail, encompassing both head and tail, then technical communicators with a college degree and high-level skills stand to form the head of the process, while working with the multitude of Web 2.0 document producers, who form the long tail of information gathering and composition. This concept will become more evident in light of the upcoming discussion about shifts in information gathering, knowledge production, and product dissemination in the era of Web 2.0.

Literature Review

While technology is a mainstay in the field of technical communication, much of the literature of the past decade on the professional status of technical communication concerns how, not just technology, but also document production and, more significantly, knowledge building and information management, comprise the work of technical communicators (Davis, 2001; Spinuzzi, 2007; Anschuetz & Rosenbaum, 2002; Slattery, 2007). Davis (2001) sees technical communicators as more than just "tool jockeys," and believes that the professionalization of TC is undercut by overattention to crafting and the tools of technology. She notes, "We must complete the evolution from craftsperson to professional" (p. 139). A change in the way technical communicators portray themselves—as technicians using computer tools or as creators and visionaries of computer-facilitated tasks, as translators of information or as voices in the design process—can make a difference in how technical communicators are perceived as professionals (Davis, 2001; Porter 2001).

TC scholars also agree that technical communication has been experiencing an identity crisis as well as a crisis of credibility (Spilka, 2002; Faber & Johnson-Eilola, 2002; Davis 2001). The profession's historical uncertainties about its value, worth and place, however, could provide the impetus for reform. Writes Spilka (2002), these uncertainties "could reflect our . . . struggle to come of age, to evolve into something more permanent, credible, and valued, namely a profession" (p. 97). How exactly that professionalization might happen is up for debate, but Spilka (2002) goes on to suggest a strategy. First, embrace the diversity that characterizes technical communication (p. 97). The field is filled with people doing all kinds of work that falls under the label of technical communication, from document construction to web site design, to usability testing and usability management, to project and marketing management. Second, establish a vision of what we want the profession to be and then create a set of goals to get there. Finally, organize a consortium of diverse members to plot a path to achieve the goals (p. 97).

Talk among TC scholars is that TC lacks the qualities of a profession (Anschuetz & Rosenbaum, 2002; Faber & Johnson-Eilola, 2002; Schriver, 2002; Johnson, 2004). They are concerned that the field is characterized by the products technical communicators create—manuals, websites, reports—and that the value of technical

communication is based on products. Faber and Johnson-Eilola (2002) note that "[w] hereas production is the key feature of the industrial economy, knowledge is the key feature of the information economy," and the problem for TC is that we have defined ourselves through the making of products, not knowledge (p. 137). Anschuetz and Rosenbaum (2002) present examples of technical writers and editors who moved out of document production jobs into management and strategist positions. One technical communicator whom they interviewed had moved from Technical Writer to Associate Partner for Technology, one from Technical Editor to Usability Lab Manager, and one from Senior Technical Writer to Business Operations Strategist (pp. 151–56). Like Spilka and Mirel, they advocate for expanded roles in design and management of information and knowledge for technical communicators. High level activities, such as *manage*, *leverage*, and *build*, have entered the vocabulary when describing what technical communicators really do. As Web 2.0 tool jockeys—amateurs in the field who populate the "long tail" of production—take on the more technical tasks of document production, professionally trained and, perhaps, future certified technical communicators can be acknowledged in these high-skill roles of manager and producer.

How can this transition be accomplished? Key here is the need for some deep thinking about the work of technical communicators, a reenvisioning of the leadership roles available, a visionary approach to repositioning the TC professional in industry, and rearticulation of the value of technical communication as a profession. Mirel (2002) advocates active involvement in change. Spilka (2002) echoes that sentiment:

> To resolve the current identity and credibility crisis, we need to make both external and internal changes. In addition to engaging in external organizational politicking and strategic positioning, we need to modify our internal collective consciousness to leverage our diversity rather than bemoaning that our lack of consensus to date is some kind of tragic flaw that we might never be able to overcome. (p.101)

Thus, technical communicators must first see their full potential as participants in decision making and then market their higher level skills.

One problem in the reconfiguration of value and position within TC, write Faber and Johnson-Eilola (2002), is that TC does not have the academic programs or professional practices in place to facilitate this new professionalism (p. 141). They

recommend what they call a hybrid corporate/academic pedagogical interface to facilitate the practice of higher-level thinking and management skills following the business school model of on-campus interfacing with industry. A relationship between TC and industry can provide TC students with firsthand practice in creating solutions to business problems, say Faber and Johnson-Eilola (p. 143). They believe that this direct integration of academia and industry "emphasizes the importance of knowledge flow between academic and corporate sites. It also emphasizes the move to knowledge-based work in corporate settings" (p. 145). Such collaboration could be beneficial to TC.

The marriage of academics and industry on campus strikes fear in the hearts of some, however. Writes Johnson (2004), "[t]he most obvious danger is that universities will become the "servants" of private interests [industry] and lose an essential element of the "academic freedom" which has been a hallmark of higher education for the last two centuries" (p. 111). Notwithstanding, Johnson recognizes that industry understands knowledge as a commodity, one that technical communicators are particularly poised to deliver and direct. He writes,

> [f]or technical and scientific communicators the fact that knowledge is now a commodity to be invented, designed, and eventually marketed holds great promise for our profession. After all, technical and scientific communicators have always been the inventors and distributors of either their own or someone else's knowledge . . . we are those information managers and knowledge specialists (pp. 113–14).

What Web 2.0 Means to the TC Profession

Web 2.0 functions both as ideology—political, economic, neoliberal—and realm of commodification and, as such, greatly impacts the TC profession. As a way out of the *new economy* crisis in 2000, says social theorist Fuchs (2008), new ways of securing investment in Internet-related business had to be found. Other scholars also view Web 2.0 in market terms. Writes Scholz (2008), "[l]ike with any bubble, the suggestion of sudden newness is aimed at potential investors." Reips and Matzat (2007) go so far as to suggest that Web 2.0 might be "an overblown marketing attempt" (p. 1). These comments lead us to believe that it is likely that Web 2.0 was created to function as

marketing strategy. They also lead us to think that, as a major player in the market, Web 2.0 is here to stay.

Rauch, Morrison and Goetz (2010) acknowledge the changes brought about by Web 2.0 technologies, and have looked closely at how those changes manifest in the workplace, namely in writer-customer interaction, customer troubleshooting, information sharing, globalization, accessibility, documentation methods and delivery, and faster product development. Interestingly, most all of these concepts are part of the technical communication profession. What we understand about Web 2.0 is this:

- Web 2.0 is more than a set of cool gadgets, sexy technologies, and social networking. It has, at its heart, powerful ideas that are changing the way people interact.

- Web 2.0 blurs the line between producer and consumer, between expert and amateur, and has shifted attention from access to information to access to people. New kinds of online resources—social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and virtual communities—allow people with common interests to meet, share ideas, and collaborate in new ways.

It is this blurring of the lines between expert and amateur that problematizes the TC profession. The chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) makes this point (McKee, July 2009):

> In a web 2.0 world, the "closed shop" model of professionalism is dead in the water. The fundamental transition of the "information society" is a transition from traditional forms of authority to a much greater focus on community: on collaboration and personalisation with traditional barriers broken down. For a Web 2.0 model of society, we need a Web 2.0 model of professionalism – not just in our use of technology but in our culture and ways of behaving.

Problematic is the reality that what was once hailed as an empowering and liberating process of production and dissemination of information has resulted in a restructuring of labor designed to cut costs. Web 2.0 usage, among other things, engenders free or amateur TC labor. For every TC communicator who has a degree, there likely is an outsourced TC communicator who does not. For every TC communicator

who works for a moderate wage, there likely is an amateur who is willing to work for less—or for nothing—as we shall see in the following discussion of paradigm shifts in the culture of communication.

Four Paradigm Shifts

Before Web 2.0 technologies were introduced mainstream, ways of producing information, mediating it, broadcasting it, and storing it were already in flux. Following is a discussion of four shifting paradigms in which previous models of communication, technology, and economics collide with newer ones (see Fig. 2).

Shift 1: From Producers and Consumers to Prosumers—Production of Information

According to Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, and Trow (1994), Western industrialized societies are passing from Mode 1 knowledge (academic, disciplinary, university-based) to Mode 2 knowledge generation (interdisciplinary,

Figure 2

Conceptualization of paradigm shifts
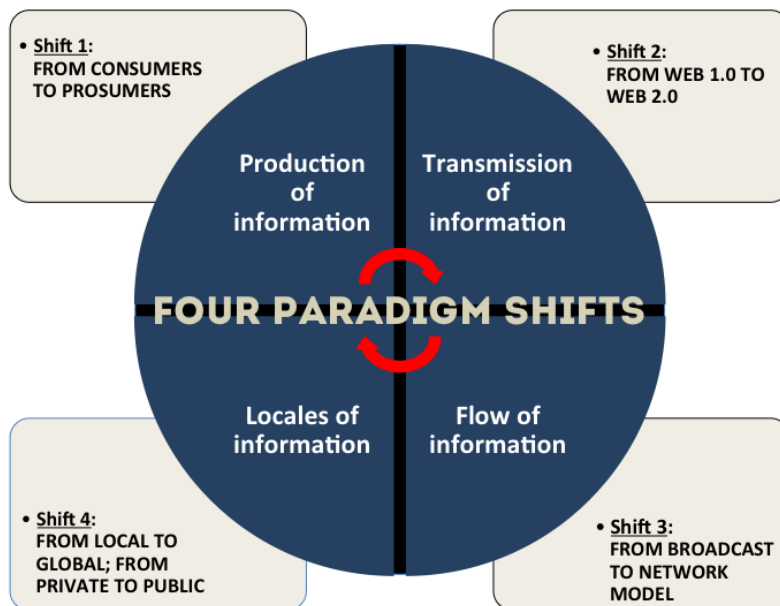
multi-institutional, performative). The production of knowledge in industrialized Western nations trends toward breaking the barriers between academic research and applied research, the world of universities and industry and government, as well as other traditionally separate disciplines. The hybrid academic/industry concept touted by Faber and Johnson-Eilola (2002) is well established, particularly in areas of science and business. It is important to note, however, that the interdisciplinary nature of Mode 2 knowledge production does not necessarily engender a democratic process. For example, in the economics of Wikipedia, what passes for a democratic process of information production—everyone gets to contribute through use of Web 2.0 tools—is far from truly democratic, considering that Wikipedia has a locked down system of editing—which is probably a good thing. Another, more insidious, problem is that Facebook's profit model is built on ownership of its users' free labor as well as on users' production of value. Facebook members build their own pages that are subject to market scrutiny and advertisements.

Consumers who produce their own goods for sale or use by others is not a new concept. The term *prosumer* is generally attributed to Alvin Toffler (1980) who argued that prosumption was predominant in preindustrial societies in cottage industries—the "first wave." Cottagers produced, consumed, and sold the goods they produced at home. This economy was followed by the "second wave" of marketization, industrialization, and its factory concept, which he says drove "a wedge into society, giving birth to what we now call producers and consumers" (p. 266). Contemporary society, in Toffler's view, is moving away from the aberrant separation of production and consumption towards a "third wave" of once again both consuming and producing, which, in part, signals the reintegration of the "prosumer" (p. 265). Witness again the Facebook phenomenon in which members produce their own pages and consume other Facebookers' pages. The trend seems clearly moving toward putting consumers to work—turning them into prosumers—as either unpaid or underpaid employees.

What results is the Pro-Am, or professional-amateur—a seeming oxymoron— who transgresses the boundaries of producer and consumer and participates in adding value to the thing produced and consumed. Leadbeater and Miller (2004) define the Pro-Am:

A Pro-Am pursues an activity as an amateur, mainly for the love of it, but sets a professional standard. Pro-Ams are unlikely to earn more than a small portion of their income from their pastime but they pursue it with the dedication and commitment associated with a professional. (p. 20)

We know Pro-Ams as *geeks*, *nerds*, *hackers*, and *enthusiasts*. They are also sometimes retired professionals. They are a "new social hybrid," write Leadbeater and Miller (2004), who note, "[t]heir activities are not adequately captured by the traditional definitions of work and leisure, professional and amateur, consumption and production" (p. 20). Pro-Ams contribute to fields such as astronomy, sports such as golf and tennis, music and, of course, computers and technology. They produce goods and services which they also consume and "create a sense of identity for themselves through consumption" (p. 22). A Pro-Am in the theater might spend weekends attending theatre camps and performing there.

How do Pro-Ams affect the nature of production and consumption in the area of technical communication? For one thing, as Leadbeater and Miller (2004) note, "[c]omputer programmers who are part of the open source movement buy computers, not just to play games, but to write better software for others to use" (p. 22). In addition, the open source characteristic of Web 2.0 technologies allows and, indeed, facilitates computer enthusiasts—and anyone with computer abilities for that matter—to write documents, design graphics, and create websites for a fee and from the comfort of their home. What today's Web 2.0 technologies do for them is make their jobs much easier and give them access through open source platforms to many more customers and consumers. Leadbeater and Miller (2004) believe that "[t]here are going to be more Pro-Ams in more walks of life and they are set to have a significant influence on society: socially, politically and economically" (p. 20). Thanks to Web 2.0 technologies, Pro-Ams may now more readily compete with trained professionals.

In discussing Pro-Ams, it is appropriate to address TC freelancing. While some TC freelancers may be trained professionals, others may not be. Freelancing may draw from the Pro-Am group. In a small study of freelance technical communicators targeting the influence of corporate culture on perceived value of their work, Brady (2011) interviewed TC workers, dividing them into two groups, 1) those who had more access to corporate culture information—the high-CCS group—and 2) those

who had low exposure to the culture of the business for which they worked—the low-CCS group. In the area of perceived confidence in creating satisfied customers, the high-CCS group reported an 81.8% success rate, while the low-CCS group reported a comparable 80% rate (p. 177). One difference in communication styles, however, occurred regarding real-time—phone, in-person—versus asynchronous—email, texting—communication methods. Brady reports that "although e-mail/text was the primary means of communication for the high-CCS group," (63%), every respondent in that group (100%) also used some form of real-time communication (p. 187). In contrast, 90% of the low-CCS group said that e-mail was their major mode of communication and 60% reported using any real-time method. Asynchronous communication for the low-CCS group did not seem to affect their opinion of their work as satisfactory. This study suggests, as does the cultural study by Leadbeater and Miller on the potential economic effect of Pro-Ams, that freelancers less exposed to corporate cultures but enabled by electronic tools, stand to impact the profession of technical communication.

It is, perhaps, within this very dynamic that the expertise of the technical communicator trained in rhetoric, analysis, and information management can emerge as a professional distinct from the Pro-Am. In information intensive industries, technical communicators can find a place as, not just information producers but, more significantly, as information brokers with the skills to structure, mediate and transmit information into knowledge.

Shift 2: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0—Transmission/Mediation of information

Like radio in the 1920s or television in the 1950s, computer-mediated information transmission lines in the 1990s were touted as empowering, enlightening, and energizing technologies. But soon after, they too were folded into existing circuits of corporate commodification. The question becomes, who gets to mediate information, transform it into knowledge, and transmit it to the world?

LinkedIn is a Web 2.0 site devoted to professional networking with 42 million members worldwide (reported in 2009). Its content is currently translated into four languages, but a mid-2009 survey asked its members, the prosumers of the site's content, whether they would be willing to volunteer to translate the site into other languages.

That is, they were asked to do the work of translating for no pay. Translating is a highly skilled, well-paid profession. LinkedIn is a profit-making organization, and one way of increasing its profitability is to reach a larger audience through more translations of its content and to get members to do that work for them—members already do such work as uploading information about themselves, for no pay. LinkedIn is far from the only Web 2.0 site to attempt this exploitation. Google asked a number of illustrators to provide free art work for its browser, Chrome. Facebook asked for volunteers to translate explanatory language on its Web site into over 20 languages.

The reaction to such actions has sometimes been strongly negative, and it is an indication of the struggle between capitalists and prosumers over the process of prosumption, especially as it exists on Web 2.0. In the LinkedIn case, respondents were asked what nonmonetary incentives they would prefer (e.g., an upgraded LinkedIn account, or no incentive "because it's fun"). Many said no to the choices provided, with one LinkedIn participant writing that he would prefer cash. LinkedIn and other Web 2.0 sites defend such actions by saying that the exposure they are offering contributors could lead to paid work. Some members see the merit in this argument; one translator remarked on it as a great opportunity to market her skills and abilities.

Where does the work of the technical communicator fit in this new model of brokering information and transmitting knowledge? Technical communicators both produce information, in the form of manuals and other documents, and they also produce knowledge. As we think about the expansive role of technical communicators and their work as "more than just makers of communication deliverables" (Mirel & Spilka, 2002, p. 94), then we can more readily envision the role of technical communicators as knowledge disseminators in a knowledge economy. If skills in writing are "at the heart of the knowledge economy" (qtd. in Swartz & Kim, 2009, p. 219), and we believe that they are, then we must think about the role that rhetoric plays in knowledge production.

The trained technical communicator understands the role of rhetoric in the process of mediating information and transforming it into knowledge. But in what space does one create rhetoric and who gets to enter that space? Swartz and Kim (2009) tell us, "[t]he places and *kairoi* associated with technical communication are being reshaped by information and communication technologies, by near ubiquitous connectivity, and by more robust networking capabilities that have facilitated the creation of an expansive

information space" (p. 212). Web 2.0 technologies have helped expand the space onto which technical communicators can exert their rhetorical expertise, a skill which is both desired and required by industry of all types. In fact, such a skill is more or less mandated by web technology. As Spinuzzi (2007) has noted:

> when we are all potentially in contact with each other, across organizational and disciplinary lines, we must persuade more people coming from different domains—not just our superiors and coworkers, but also service providers, contractors, customers, and amateur enthusiasts of relevant communities. Stakeholders multiply, as do the connections between them (p. 272).

Technical communicators are particularly poised to succeed as rhetoricians in the digital age. As Slattery (2007) reminds us, "the profession of technical writing straddles technological and rhetorical skill" (p. 314). Thus, the trained technical communicator stands to benefit from Web 2.0 technologies that open new spaces and new valuations for rhetoric.

Technical communicators function, not only as rhetorical strategists, but also as curators of knowledge. They have the know-how to manipulate, manage, distill and explain information—to create a knowledge product. Curating and mediating are value-added elements of the profession. O'Keefe (2009), in discussing the *friend or foe* concept of Web 2.0 in relation to technical communication, sees Web 2.0 technologies as offering "an opportunity for technical writers to participate as "curators" – by evaluating and organizing the information provided by end users." She notes:

> [t]echnical writers are accustomed to being the gatekeepers for product information. They carefully organize product documentation, online help, and other user assistance for their readers. Compare this to the chaos of the Web, where content is splattered across blogs, forums, wikis, and the like with little or no organizational scheme.

O'Keefe recognizes the value of user-generated information on the Web, saying it can be authentic, passionate and specific, but adds that it generally is not comprehensive, edited or curated. As more and more information comes to industry from end-users, the work that technical communicators do—manage data and turn it into useful

knowledge—will be an increasingly valued skill, and one that stands to reposition the technical communicator in the professional world of industry. Web 2.0 is our friend.

Shift 3: From Broadcast to Network Model—Flow of Information

In a broadcast model, those who control the distribution channels often profit more than the creators. Think of record labels, newspapers, or the six o'clock evening news. We are now, however, in an era of networked flows of information fueled by Web 2.0 concepts, which has changed the distribution of information.

As a result of the multi-directional distributive aspect of Web 2.0, much content, nowadays, will be first encountered away from the domain which perhaps originated it. With this dislocation of source comes the threat of information degradation. But to a large degree, the nonhierarchical nature of the Internet protects it against such failures, providing adequate means of self-correction. Says Gilmore (qtd. in Elmer-Dewitt, 1993), "The Net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it." But as soon as communication begins to move one way only—generally from top to bottom—these self-regulating and self-correcting features are disabled. Cyberneticists know that one-way, hierarchical, or top-down (i.e., nondemocratic) communication channels do not behave intelligently because, as Boulding (1966) observes:

> there is a great deal of evidence that almost all organizational structures tend to produce false images in the decision maker, and that the larger and more authoritarian the organization, the better the chance that its top decision-makers will be operating in purely imaginary worlds.

Effective communication runs both ways. Attempts at restricting data flow—in the form of censorship, for example—not only suppress information, but also disrupt the dissemination of correct information. In technical communication, dissemination of incorrect information can mean the difference between life and death (e.g., in the medical profession, engineering).

Who controls—in the sense of giving it direction—this flow of information? Cloke and Goldsmith (2002) argue that managers do, but on borrowed time:

Managers are the dinosaurs of our modern organizational ecology. The Age of Management is finally coming to a close ... Nearly unnoticed, a far-reaching organizational transformation has already begun, based on the idea that management as a system fails to open the heart or free the spirit. This revolution is attempting to turn inflexible, autocratic, static, coercive bureaucracies into agile, evolving, democratic, collaborative, self-managing webs of association. (p. 3)

Cloke and Goldsmith (2002) advocate self-managing teams as teams that are, by their very nature, "webs of association" (193). Shirky (2008) also finds value in self-governing groups. He views the "social software" of Web 2.0 as an alternate and empowering tool for amateurs because of its ability to create groups of knowledge producers in which multiple heads can be better than one. He also finds value in knowledge produced without the constraints of institutions. He writes: "we are living in the middle of a remarkable increase in our ability to share, to cooperate with one another, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutions and organizations" (20-21). Conversely, Keen (2007) writes:

[t]he Web 2.0 revolution has peddled the promise of bringing more truth to more people – more depth of information, more global perspective, more unbiased opinion from dispassionate observers. But this is all a smokescreen. What the Web 2.0 revolution is really delivering is superficial observation of the world around us rather than deep analysis, shrill opinion rather than considered judgment. (p.16)

Technical communicators of this century can straddle this philosophical divide. They can embrace the advantages Web 2.0 tools provide for sharing and collaborating data and at the same time position themselves as the arbiters of that data, as the ones whose job it is to execute "deep analysis" and "considered judgment" to create knowledge out of the plethora of voices on the Web.

Technical communication is, in its distributive nature, team-driven. Technical writers and editors often collect the documented expertise of their collaborators and, as Slattery (2007) puts it, "stitch together assemblages of source information which they weave into new documentation" (p. 324). The role of the technical writer, in this instance, is artist of the vision of the final document, arbiter of the rhetoric of the piece. While Web 2.0 enables construction and dissemination of documents that may never

pass through a final arbiter, nevertheless, a place for the technical communicator as manager of information exists where curating and arbitration is needed.

The distributive nature of technical communication and the particular skills of the technical communicator make the profession particularly suited to work within the Web 2.0 flow of information system. Just as it is the skills of curating and decision-making that enable technical communicators to mediate information, so it is their expertise in technology, analysis and management that enables them to succeed in working with the complex flow of information and texts that comprise the Web 2.0 workplace. Slattery (2007), in his study of the work of technical writers for one business-to-business technical documentation firm, found that, in the distributed nature of the work at that institution—writers from various areas contributed texts from which the technical writers generated documents—"documentation is not so much written as it is assembled—a pastiche of contributions from multiple individuals" (p. 315). In his study, Slattery calls attention to, not only the large number of texts that the technical communicators in this business dealt with, but also the large number of organizations participating in the construction of the documents, as well as coordination with the IT department on generation of, access to, and retrieval and manipulation of texts and data. Further, TC professionals must, not only collaborate on data acquisition and collate information, they must also manage the whole process. Says Slattery, the "writers are experts in soliciting expertise from others and instantiating it in the end product document" (p. 319).

Such expertise should be the focus of the profession as we move forward. Slattery (2007) reminds us of a clear danger in focusing too closely on technology for the future of the profession: "There is the additional concern that if our expertise is merely technological, sea changes in the ease of use of that technology might threaten narrowly defined technical writing positions" (p. 323). Savvy Web 2.0 users are already challenging use of technology. Technical communicators who can execute and manage a balanced, free flow distribution of information stand to succeed in a Web 2.0 environment.

Shift 4: From Local to Global; From Private to Public—Locales of Information

In the 1970s, loosely coupled transnational alliances of information producers began to coordinate local markets, regional governments, global capital, and sophisticated technologies. In the 21st century, writes Shirky (2008), "[m]ost of the barriers to group action have collapsed . . . We can have groups that operate with a birthday party's informality and a multinational's scope" (p. 48). But can we? In the early days of computers, everyone shared access to a large mainframe. Later, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates put computing power in the hands and on the desktops of the individual. Today, with the advent of cloud computing (Web 3.0, or centralized storage sites of information), we are about to return much of this computing power to central locations.

Amazon.com has a centralized storage site, as do other large, corporate entities. As industries refocus on centralized systems of information structuring, management and storage, they will value employees with the skills to manage and synthesize. Further, as brick and mortar industries follow suit to centralize control of their information, more opportunities can arise. As Davis writes in 2001, "[t]he technical communicator with a degree in the field is widely becoming the preferred employee in industry" (p. 83). Thus, facilitating relationships with industry in TC pedagogy, the hybrid academic/industry relationship advocated by Faber and Johnson-Eilola, has the potential to be an auspicious move for the profession in the age of Web 2.0/3.0.

Another clear impact on technical communication regarding the shift from private to public involves globalization. As Starke-Meyerring, Duin and Palvetzian (2007) note, technical communicators "increasingly work in globally distributed teams, directly engage diverse customers and other stakeholders in digital networks, and experience the influence of local and global policies, agreements, and corporate practices on their work as well as on their roles as citizens" (p. 167). As such, technical communicators draw on, not only their technology, managerial, and rhetorical skills, but also on their cultural communication skills to interact with constituents across geographical boundaries and cultures. Further, technical communicators who work for transnational corporations must be equipped with keen contextualization skills in order to negotiate content from the standpoint of cultural difference. As Collier and Toomey (1997) note, technical communication is not just a process of gathering and presenting

information and persuading, but rather it "is a process shaped by the contexts in which it occurs" (p. 3). Contextualization takes on new significance as a skill in globalized networks of information.

Faber and Johnson-Eilola (2002) recognize the significance of globalization and knowledge production on the field of technical communication: "In the context of global competition, the ability to create and access new knowledge, share that knowledge throughout the company, and then leverage that knowledge into new products and services becomes more valuable than the ability to simply manufacture a product … Knowledge is the key feature of the information economy" (p. 137). The domain of international commerce provides fertile ground for the technical communicator to create and foster skills that establish the profession in a global economy.

Web 2.0 and the Future of TC

Rheingold (2002) predicts that tomorrow's fortunes will be made by those businesses that find a way to profit from changes in communication technologies. First, of course, companies will have to understand those technologies, and this understanding goes beyond knowing which buttons to push. It begins with understanding that a profound paradigm shift is underway, has been underway, changing the way people think, interact, govern, buy/sell, create, work—simply put, changing the way we conduct our lives. Rheingold observes: "As with the personal computer and the Internet, key breakthroughs won't come from established industry leaders but from the fringes, from skunkworks and startups and even associations of amateurs. *Especially* associations of amateurs" [his italics] (xiii). Thus, technical communication can profit from the inventors and creative artists hawking their wares on the Internet. Collaboration with the Pro-Ams and tool jockeys just seems like a good idea. In doing this, however, technical communication must also let go of its past pigeon-hole image as document producer, and reposition itself in terms of more diverse services: management, decision making and knowledge production.

Significantly, technical communicators stand to prosper in the globalized economy amid the Internet start-ups and skunkworks by being savvy cross-media communicators. That is, they can show professional versatility as print and non-print professionals, as intelligent rhetoricians and conscionable managers, as well as

culturally aware and intelligent decision makers. Writes Klink (2000), "[d]espite the current popularity of multimedia computing, and the suitability of visual language to an online environment, the future of effective communication does not lie solely in electronic realms." He adds, "there is a growing demand for creative people who are experienced at working with a variety of media types." A wide variety of skills, executed professionally and creatively, is needed now, perhaps more than ever, as business and industry embraces Web 2.0.

We return to our view of emerging Web 2.0 technologies in TC playing a role in the cultural, as well as economic "long tail of production." We see professional technical communicators of the future engaging a multitude of amateur and semi-professional communicators, interacting and sharing information through Web 2.0 tools. Future TC professionals will do this with ease as Web 2.0 is part and parcel of their world. We have no doubt that such practitioners will compete against, and engage amateurs in creativity, speed of dissemination, connectivity, and sharing of resources. But unlike some of those presenting as amateurs, trained technical communicators will have a body of other skills that they have gained in the classroom—rhetorical, analytical, contextual, creative, and cultural. These skills will form the base of professionalism, the "head" of the knowledge production process. Such skills will inform the trained technical communicator's production of knowledge and will be applied to the "long tail" of the production process where information is supplied by any skilled technician. Anyone can produce new or sexy or different products using Web 2.0 tools, and anyone will. Thus, in this multi-dimensional, sharing, free and daring process of creating knowledge, a host of exciting possibilities opens up.

How can future technical communicators carve out a space as knowledge workers in a globalized, hybridized, and increasingly centralized environment? How can they establish and maintain professionalism in the face of prevalent amateurism? O'Keefe (2009) suggests that technical communicators consider the following:

- Acknowledge the value of, and read, online communications such as blogs, forums, and wikis.

- Fix mistakes found in online discussions, and edit pertinent wiki pages, being sure that you understand the wiki's culture.

- Make known your company affiliation (create a pseudonym if you prefer not to use your name).

- Accept that you are no longer necessarily the gatekeeper of the company's information, but think of yourself as curator of the company's information and make it accessible and useful.

As often as not, it will be the quality of the product, the accuracy of information, and the degree of professionalism in construction, contextualization, and dissemination that will make the professional technical communicator stand out in the crowd that is Web 2.0.

CONCLUSION

Wellman and Gulia (1999) claim that just about everything that happens in face-to-face interactions also happens online—it just happens differently. Let us remind ourselves what Web 2.0 aims to achieve: the construction of a global social net where business news, information, videos, and viral ads zoom through the *people net* and stick for a moment to a couple of eyeballs before zooming on to the next knot in the matrix. How the academy and the profession react to the influx of Web 2.0 tools, users, and contributors will be a big part of how we professionalize the field. Cooperation is essential. Opportunities should also be taken to distinguish the trained technical communicator from the Web 2.0 Pro-Am, to publicize and legitimize the skills of trained communicators with the end goal of licensure or certification. Should this proposal sound elitist, let us add that, done in the spirit of democracy, recognizing that we all work together in *the long tail of production*, such a move could enhance technical communication as a profession.

Web 2.0 is upon us, has been for years. It is already morphing into Web 3.0—the semantic Web—and with this evolution will come, not only more challenges to TC, but also more opportunities. Are we ready for the (r)evolution? ■

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THE "GENREOLOGY" OF U.S. ARMY WORLD WAR I REPORTS

An exploration of historical genre change

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Scholars in professional communication often focus on how genres function within business. One example is JoAnne Yates (1993), who argues, from a historical point of view, that the genres of business communication changed during the early twentieth century, in the United States. She argues that, as small, family owned companies grew exponentially at the turn of the last century, so did the need for business communication to become more controlled and impersonal (p. xv). But there is a lack of further significant research on how the organizational changes that affected early twentieth century business communication genres also influenced the communication that occurred in other sectors, such as the government. My article argues that the communication in one branch of the government—the U.S. Army—was affected by the changes of the early twentieth century, as shown through examples of government-released reports from the army's famous First Division as they fought in France during an international conflict: World War I.

Keywords. Genre theory, Professional communication, World War I.

The World at War

Between 1914 and 1918, the *machine age* contributed to the death of almost fourteen million men and the wounding of twenty-two million more during the Great War (Lengel, 2008, p. 71). As World War I progressed, soldiers were sent up against machine guns, artillery, tanks, and poison gases, resulting in mass slaughter. "The Doughboys
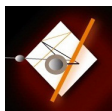
[American soldiers] never forgot the poison gas. Decades later, nightmares would wake them, choking and sweating, in the night" (p. 76). As a result, soldiers quickly learned the devastating consequences of the union between the machine age and war.

The staggering number of men killed or wounded during World War I is significant because it demonstrates the enormous scale of the conflict. What is more, the process of organizing the first modern army in U.S. history was no small matter. For instance, when the United States entered World War I, in April 1917, the standing American Army was quite small, having only about 130,000 men, and many of these were spread around places such as Panama and the Philippines (Evans, 2001, p. xx). To put the numbers in perspective, Evans points out that, in early 1918, Germany had about 250 divisions on the Western Front, which amounted to more than four million men (p. xxi). As a result, the United States had to quickly solve, not only a massive recruitment problem, but also an embarkation problem.

The massive recruitment and embarkation challenges were solved by Congress. Henry J. Reilly, Brigadier General and author of the *1936 Americans All*, explains that the 1917 Congress decided to "raise a war army made up of a greatly expanded regular army, a greatly expanded National Guard in Federal service, and a national army raised by the Federal government along the lines of the U.S. volunteers . . . but recruited by the draft instead of volunteering" (p. 23). James Hallas (2000), in *Doughboy War*, describes how, by the end of World War I, the U.S. Army had grown from 130,000 men to five million, the largest fighting force the country had ever seen (p. 1). Such a huge change in overall size obviously affected the way the organization functioned, at many levels. For instance, the army increased the size of companies from 100 men to 250, and regiments from 1,000 men to 3,700 (Taber, 1925, p. 13).

As the first decade of the new century came to a close, "The extraordinary force of machine power would astonish the world and result in a prolonged World War—a war with unprecedented destruction and a shocking loss of life" (Ford, 2008, p. 71). Ford discusses the widely held understanding that the machine age affected, not only civilian society, but also the nature of warfare. In World War I, according to Nancy Gentile Ford (2008), "America, like Europe, sought progress in the machine age" (p. 71).

The Machine Age

Historian Thomas Hughes (1989) has described the century after 1870 as characterized by the technological and cultural shift to what some economic and social analysts called Fordism. This technology included, not only Henry Ford's famous assembly line—dating from 1913—but also the division of labor and prescription of work behavior that made it possible; practices that were formalized in Federick Winslow Taylor's system of scientific management developed just a few years earlier.

As large business organizations of the late nineteenth century stitched regional networks together to create national markets, they altered both the form and meaning of local autonomy (Zunz, 1990, p. 12). Additionally, the nature of relationships between the labor force and the managers, as well as the highly individual identification of persons with their firms, underwent considerable change in the "big businesses which had evolved by the turn of the century" (Porter, 1973, p. 20). The bureaucracy became more impersonalized, as "complex administrative network[s] created a social and economic gap between men on various levels of . . . hierarchy" (p. 21). As the operations of a single business grew larger, more involved, and more widely separated, individual employees often had no knowledge of the distant, almost invisible people who controlled and manipulated the business and, to some degree, their lives. Many workers had little or no understanding of their part in the overall operations of the giant organization, and work itself, as well as their relations with others in the organization, grew increasingly impersonal (Porter, 1973, p. 22).

Systematic management developed theories and techniques that transcended the individual by relying, instead, on the system. It had two primary principles: "(1) a reliance on systems mandated by top management rather than on individuals, and (2) the need for each level of management to monitor and evaluate performance at lower levels" (Yates, 1993, p. 10). Yates claims: "During the years from 1850 to 1920, a new philosophy of management based on system and efficiency arose, and under its impetus internal communication came to serve as a mechanism for managerial coordination and control of organizations" (p. xix). This was vastly different from early nineteenth-century America where business enterprises were generally small, family affairs. The internal operations of these firms were controlled and coordinated through informal, personal

communication. Employers and employees, according to JoAnne Yates (1993), would use word of mouth, except when letters were needed to span distance (p. xv).

As businesses continued to evolve in the early twentieth century, one major means of maintaining centrality was to extend an informational web to regularize the flow of information, largely through the use of forms. The growth of forms in many businesses at this moment of history was part of the communication revolution that accompanied the rise of the modern corporation. One intention behind the use of such forms was, according to Allen and Bosley, for professional writers to produce a series of documents that appear to have been written by the same author: "to develop a unified corporate voice that is not undermined by issues of personal style and preference" (p. 84).

This emphasis on documents—not on the writer—means the documents are more efficient to produce (Allen and Bosley, 1994, p. 84). Further: "The goal of furthering corporate efficiency contributes to a more indirect control of voice, one that textbooks on writing and on [professional] communication do not prepare writers to meet" (p. 93). Even more importantly, when writers are "concealed behind corporate identities and bylines, a sense of personal responsibility may be more difficult to muster and may even appear to be inappropriate" (p. 85).

One of the reasons for maintaining a corporate voice would be to control the style and the textual variations of style that could result from personal voice and could lead to confusion. "Close adherence to guidelines also makes chunks of text interchangeable from one document to another. Corporations assume that, by controlling style, writers will produce documents that have the same voice" (Allen and Bosley, 1994, p. 85). The change to a more controlled and more impersonal nature in American business communication was, according to Yates, essentially complete by the end of World War I (p. xix).

The Role of Genre

Amy Devitt (2004) argues that, as the nature of business changes, genres fill in the gaps of newly developed functions and reflect new roles for participants, as well as new situations:

Each new genre adds something a bit different to what exists, each develops out of different antecedents, even as each develops in a common context. Together, they indicate the complex interaction of genres and functions, of how contextual changes lead to perceived needs that are absorbed by modifying existing genres into newly constructed genres (p. 97).

In many ways, the detailed history of these genres reminds us of the typical origin of a genre: gradual development over time by modifying existing genres, responding to gradually emerging cultural and situational changes, especially newly perceived functions and changing relationships among participants (p. 97).

The particular genres that constituted the genre repertoire changed as the business world's functions, forums, and relationships changed. Completely new genres (that is, those that may have had antecedents but that appear not to have been perceived generically, previously) developed to meet the community's new needs (Devitt, 2004, p. 94). Among the new genres were circular letters or general orders issuing specific policies or procedures, routine and special reports, various kinds of forms, manuals describing the company's systematic procedures, in-house magazines, and managerial meetings. Yates points to possible antecedents for the new genres, confirming our expectation that new genres appear to emerge from other genres. Circular letters, for instance, had three possible antecedents in purpose, form, and audience: military orders first, advertising circulars second, and printed company rules as the third. Although Yates finds such antecedents for various aspects of these new genres, each genre, of course, differs significantly from its antecedents, as it fulfills some "newly developed purpose for the business community, purposes that emerge from the significant cultural changes of the time" (p. 66).

A rhetorical theory of genre, though, must look beyond particular classifications—which are only the indicators of genres, and change as our purposes change—and forms—which may trace, but do not constitute genre. Instead, genre theory must consider other factors, such as societal motives. At the beginning of *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1965) wonders: "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (p. xv). Similarly, Anis Bawarshi (2000), in "The Genre Function", claims that, as recent theory has it, genre entails purposes, participants, and themes, so understanding genre entails understanding a rhetorical situation and its social context (p. 356).

Recent genre theory that connects genre to purposes, participants, and themes derives from the notion of genre as typified response to a recurring rhetorical situation. Campbell (2009) traces the idea's roots to a 1965 discussion of genre by Edwin Black, in which he describes genres as responding to types of situations that recur. Carolyn Miller's definition (1984), developing out of the body of rhetorical scholarship that followed, defines genres as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (p. 159). Much of North American genre scholarship in composition and rhetoric has since followed Miller's definition.

While acknowledging Miller's influence on genre theory, other scholars delineate with their own related strains of genre theory. For instance, David Russell (1997) uses Vygotskian activity theory to define genre as "typified ways of purposefully interacting in and among some activity system(s)" (p. 513). Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin (1995) use Giddens's structuration theory to define genres as "dynamic rhetorical forms that are developed from actors' responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning" (p. 4). Although these scholars use very different theories to articulate and describe their definitions in important ways, Amy Devitt (2004) in *Writing Genres* argues that they both follow Miller in including some common elements of a genre definition: "that genre is action, that genre is typified action, that typification comes from recurring conditions, and that those conditions involve a social context" (p. 13).

In my overview thus far, rhetorical scholars view genre visible in classification and form where relationships and patterns develop when language users identify different tasks as being similar. Charles Bazerman (2008) explains that genre research

> goes beyond a gathering of details to a search for order and systematicity—in the historically produced systems of contemporary practice; in the processes by which practices, forms, and texts emerge, evolve, and decline; in the actual responses individuals and groups make within socially organized situations; and in the ways texts mediate actions and social relations (p. 300).

Similarly, Devitt argues, genre exists through "people's individual rhetorical actions at the nexus of the contexts of situation, culture, and genres" (2004, p. 31). But if genres are

generic responses to social situations and culture(s), then how do these genres originate, in the first place?

If there is an exigence—someone telling someone else to do something—then who decides how to frame the response? Campbell gives one explanation in that the complex relationships between form and content are part of the ways in which genres work: "Our ability to understand the form-content relationships created in communal practice are aspects of our social competence, but they also represent communicative potentials" (p. 263). Devitt echoes:

> If each writing problem were to require a completely new assessment of how to respond, writing would be slowed considerably, but once a writer recognizes a recurring situation, a situation that others have responded to in the past, the writer's response to that situation can be guided by past responses. Genre, thus, depends heavily on the intertextuality of discourse (p. 15).

The idea of the intertextuality of discourse mentioned by Devitt connects to Miller's observation that, "What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms . . . We learn, more importantly, what ends we have" (1979, p. 165).

Sometimes, though, in the field of rhetoric, we study genres we don't understand, especially when we don't know the exigence. This kind of study usually happens when we (1) try to go back into time, and don't understand the context, or (2) study very new emerging genres. Devitt had said this in 2004: "At least as important as recognizing antecedents in the context of genres is recognizing cultural and situational antecedents: the developing changes in ideologies, institutions, and settings that create the circumstances for a new genre" (2004, p. 93).

While studying new genres, especially with technological leanings is useful (Spilka, 2010, Miller & Shepherd, 2004, Spinuzzi, 2003), I enjoy trying to understand the context and exigence of the past as part of the genre. As part of this process, tracing the history of a genre might lead to other genres. "Where do genres come from?" asks Tzvetan Todorov. He answers: "Quite simply from other genres. A new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination" (1990, p. 15).

Research Methodology of World War I Report Genre

My interest in early twentieth century history led me to the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. During my initial visit, I realized the museum had an archive available to the public for research. I then discovered the government-released *Official Records of the First Division* belonging to the AEF (American Expeditionary Forces). These records included various documents such as general orders, bulletins, and reports. Though these records were bound in volumes, they have never officially been published for wide distribution to research libraries.

I was interested in The First Division of the AEF because it is often considered by historians as a representative example of the U.S. Army, in that it was the first already-standing army unit to be sent *over there* to France. For instance, the *History of the First Division during the World War: 1917-1919* states: "The Division was truly representative of America. Among its original members and among the dead at the end of its campaigns and battles were the sons of [47 states, 2 territories, and 4 possessions]" (p. 13).

The volumes of the *Official Records of the First Division* were divided into the following respective categories: field orders, summaries of intelligence, miscellaneous memoranda, operations reports, war diaries, and training documents. Due to the amount of information in the collection of records, I focused on volumes 12 and 13; these volumes contain the operations reports of the main battles that the First Division is known to have fought: Sommerville (Fall 1917), Cantigny (Spring 1918), Soissons (Summer 1918), St. Mihiel (Fall 1918), Meuse-Argonne (Fall 1918). (See Figure 1, p. 41). These operations reports, generally speaking, would have provided the chain of command specific tactical information on the day-to-day maneuverings and the official reports of battles of the First Division in France. As I was reviewing the documents, I learned of the First Division's role in each of its battles and the complex, often messy, ways the U.S. Army communicated through written reports.

While many of the documents I looked at demonstrated forethought and strategic planning, others seemed spontaneous—more the result of momentary circumstances than of design. Sonja K. Foss (2009) explains that such a collection of documents lends itself to genre analysis: "Generic criticism is rooted in the assumption that certain types of situations provoke similar needs and expectations in audiences

Figure 1

Map of First Division fighting areas. 1. Cantigny; 2. Soissons;

3. Meuse-Argonne; 4. St. Mihiel; 5. Ansauville Sector; 6. Sommerville Sector
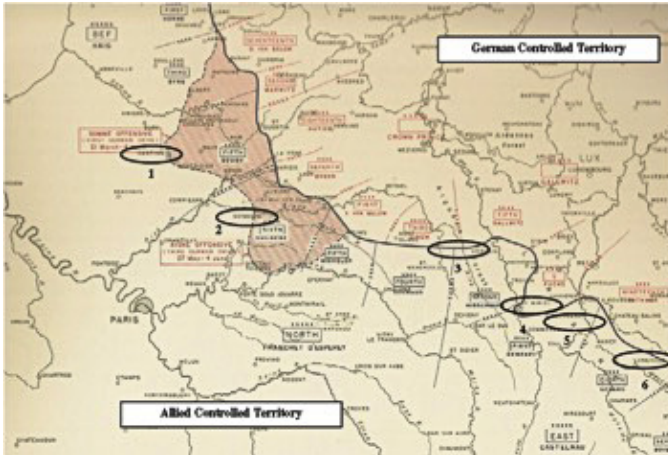
Source: The Western Front in 1918 in *The West Point Atlas of World War I*

and thus call for particular kinds of rhetoric" (p. 137). By focusing on just the operations reports, which were contained in volumes 12 and 13, I have chosen representative texts that reveal the rhetorical activity of the discourse. John Creswell (2007) would refer to this as sampling, which allows researchers to engage in large and otherwise unmanageable scholarly efforts" (p. 55).

Over the ensuing two years, I revisited the National World War I archives a few times to scan volumes 12 and 13 more comprehensively. These research trips were made possible by the C. R. Anderson Research Grant, through the Association for Business Communication. With my high-resolution hand-held scanner, I replicated over 2,000 pages of records. These 2,000 pages of records included around 300 operations reports. Shorter reports ranged from one to two pages, whereas longer reports ranged between eight and ten pages.

I then analyzed the records according to Foss's four-step process. First, I selected my artifacts of the operations reports, as described above. Second, I analyzed the artifact based on its function. I did this by using what Foss calls generic description: "You examine several artifacts to determine if a genre exists. This is an inductive operation,

in which you begin with a consideration of specific features of artifacts and move to a generalization about them in the naming of a genre" (p. 140).

In my study, I examined the operations reports, and then classified them as either daily operations reports, or special operations reports. Foss would describe generic description as involving four steps: (1) observing similarities in rhetorical responses to particular situations; (2) collecting artifacts that occur in similar situations; (3) analyzing the artifacts to discover if they share characteristics; and (4) formulating the organizing principle of the genre (p. 141). In my approach, I describe the operations reports as belonging to two categories: first, there are daily operations reports, which pertain to a specific period of time; second, there are special operations reports, which address certain topics after a battle.

The third step, according to Foss, includes formulating the research question(s). Mine included the following:

(1)   Did or did not the records systematically change during the course of the war?

(2)   If the records did systematically change, what caused this development? More specifically, to what extent did the changing relationships within the U.S. Army, as it grew geometrically during the conflict, play in the organizational communication of the First Division?

Additionally, I used the following questions that focus specifically on genre, and which complement the overarching questions already posed:

(3)   What are the formats of the various kinds of documents included in the official records of the First Division? For instance, do they *look* like reports or memos? Or do they take some other format?

(4)   What is the verbal style of the documents included in the official records? For instance, what kind of voice is used to record information?

(5)   How does each document fit into the dynamic structure of the entire official records of the First Division? In other words, how do the various documents connect to create a composite picture of the division's records?

After completing all three of the above steps, Foss would say the fourth, and final, step includes writing the results. The following section will include the results of my study

according to the analysis I conducted using generic criticism. Foss says, "The purpose of generic criticism is to understand rhetorical practices in different time periods and in different places by discerning the similarities in rhetorical situations and the rhetoric constructed in response to them" (p. 137). In my analysis, I explain how the *genreology* (the *genealogy* of the *genre*) answers my secondary set of research questions, with the following topics: format evolution, verbal style, and composite picture of the First Division's WWI records.

Analysis of First Division reports in WWI

My research shows that the written records of the First Division in World War I *did* systematically change during the course of the war. What might have caused these transformations? As mentioned earlier, the U.S. Army grew immensely during the conflict. In fact, this unprecedented growth was the main impetus behind the systematic transformation of the written records. Just as Yates' scholarship claims that civilian corporations of the time period employed written communications as a form of control over large numbers of employees, I argue that the First Division in World War I used such correspondence to enhance control over the hierarchy of a fast-growing Army.

Format Evolution

The first place to look at how the formats of the records of the First Division evolved is with the documents surrounding the first combat action in the Sommerville Sector (November 2-3, 1917). It was the first combat event for the First Division, and it resulted in the first American deaths in the war. Throughout this series of reports, there is little consistency in format. This first set of documents, therefore, presents a starting point for comparison with later documents from future events in First Division history.

After Sommerville, the First Division headed west along the front to fight in various small-scale actions, and to hold the front lines—trenches—over the winter of 1918 in the Ansauville Sector. As the Americans participated in this trench warfare, the corresponding reports assume more elements of formal standardization. For example, a memo from the Commanding General, Robert Lee Bullard, calls for daily operations reports (dated April 26, 1918). (See Figure 2, p. 44). Not only does the memo call for

Figure 2

Memo calling for daily operations reports, dated April 26, 1918.


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                              Headquarters First Division,
    G - 3                     American Expeditionary Forces,
                              France, April 26, 1918.
      253

Memorandum for Commanding Generals, 1st Brigade and Artill-
ery Brigade

Subject:  Daily reports.

      1.  The following Operation reports  will be made to
these headquarters daily:

          (a)  TELEPHONIC.

               6:30 A.M. to cover events of the night.
               3:30 P.M. to cover events of the day.

          (b)  WRITTEN.

               A daily written report will be made, accord-
ing to the attached model, to reach these Headquarters by
1:00 P.M., covering the events of the previous 24 hours
from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.

               The battalions in the first line will make
their written reports to cover the period from 6:00 A.M. to
6:00 A.M., the regiments consolidating the battalion reports
and making the regimental report cover the period from
10:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.  Special events occurring between
6:00 A.M. will be reported by battalions to regimental
headquarters by telephone.

      2.  The Infantry Brigade may consolidate the regi-
mental written reports or send them direct to these Headquart-
ers, accompanied by a statement from the Brigade Commander
of his view on the situation along the entire Divisional front.

      3.  The importance of the prompt despatch of these re-
ports is evident. In the present military situation delays
might cause serious result.

                    By command of Major General Bullard:

                         CAMBELL KING
                           Chief of Staff.
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daily operations reports, but it also provides a model for how the information should be communicated. The reports are to cover events of the day from 10 a.m. to 10 a.m. of the next day—note that modern military time is not yet used—and they are due at Division Headquarters by 1 p.m. At the very end of the memo, the rhetorical exigency for such communication is stated: "The importance of the prompt dispatch of these reports is evident. In the present military situation delays might cause serious result." The information included within the reports, as the models, were to start with the general characteristics of the day and end with "miscellaneous data." Here, when compared to

the variety of reports following the first trench raid, we see evolution of format along with the emerging genre of the daily operations report.

The next step of format evolution within the records of the First Division comes from the documents surrounding the combat around Soissons. This fighting occurred during July 1918, when First Division losses totaled more than 1,000 dead and over 5,000 wounded. The daily operations report, as it was developed during the division's time in the Ansauville Sector, would not appear in the reports from Soissons. Instead, special operations reports emerged at this time, such as one on the subject of the loss of automatic weapons. Such a change in the kinds of reports being used begs the question: Why does there appear to be no daily operations reports for the First Division's actions in the Soissons area? Given the earlier push for format standardization in daily operations reports, the rhetorician might assume that there would be at least a few such reports accompanying the emergence of the new special operations report. However, as genres change, writers adapt. For instance, Division Headquarters asked the lieutenant who wrote the special operations report on Soissons to report specifically on the loss of weapons. Perhaps, there was no need for daily operations reports during this operation. Or, perhaps, the scale of warfare at the time led to the emergence of the special operations report as an alternative genre.

Although I was not there, I expect that the First Division needed a way to systematically format and organize the communication of events as the army increased in size. A move toward format standardization, in the Division's case, was a matter of necessity as its leadership tried to learn how to expedite actions, movements, and policies during the hostilities. If the reports were not standardized, then the officers would not be able to find the information they needed at a glance.

For instance, after the Sommerville Sector, the first few reports were not standardized and the reader would have to sift through the documents to find the information they might need, such as what individuals were involved, who died, and how the attack happened. Finding this information efficiently would have been difficult. The rhetorician would certainly note how, in introducing bulleted lists and headings, First Division report writers made reading the final Sommerville Sector report an easier task for most readers. For example, in the final report from the Sommerville Sector, there is a section where there is a list of lessons to be learned from the incident, such as keeping

the trenches better maintained. By moving toward a standardized format of reports, the First Division in later events would be able to glean information from a variety of officers who would write the two emerging reports: the daily operations report and the special operations report. More specifically, the daily operations report model would call for sections covering visibility, artillery activity, aerial activity, and losses. On the other hand, the special operations report model would call for sections on characteristics of terrain, artillery support, and data about conquered ground. Since these two emerging reports had clear models, with their corresponding sections, officers would know where to look within the document for the specific information they might need. Further, perhaps the apparent lack of consistent reports (i.e. daily operations reports not always present) is caused by the chaos of war, since the division did state, during the occupation, that they were missing reports.

Verbal Style

Report writers of the Sommerville Sector tried to encapsulate the action and the reasons for the American losses with personal testimony from officers and enlisted men who had witnessed the action. These reports had a personal narrative quality, when compared to the final report of the event. For instance, there are many personal pronouns used and the sentence constructions included active voice. Active voice is often described as a sentence with a verb that can take a direct object and be written in a direct pattern (Rentz and Lentz, 2014, p. 58).

Unlike the first reports, the final report tried to look objectively at the action and did not appear to use the qualities of personal narrative. For instance, the final report covers material such as specific time frames of action, and also calls for lessons to be learned from what went wrong. It also avoided using personal pronouns, and used passive sentence construction. Whereas active voice uses a direct pattern in sentence construction, passive voice is often described as a sentence with a verb that uses an indirect pattern.

The next noteworthy example of personal narrative vs. objectivity in the reports of the First Division come from the action surrounding Cantigny, which was their first major battle (see Figure 3, p. 47). The division staved off a German counterattack on

Figure 3

Report on actions against Cantigny.

REPORT ON OPERATIONS AGAINST CANTIGNY.

1. Report of Lieut Parker, commanding 1st Platoon.

I was put in command of the detachment to furnish guides and make arrangements for the "Jumping Off" trench. This detail left MAISONCELLE in the evening og May 26. The detail entered the sector without any casualties and began work at once. The enemy made a raid on the morning of the 27th of May at which time the entire sector was subjected to a heavy bombardment. During the bombardment Corp. Randolph was buried in the front line, by a shell caving in the parapet. He was evacuated in a short while after the raid was over. He was severely shell shocked and crushed. A captain reported to me that the enemy had penetrated our lines beyond the support position. There were many scattered soldiers around Bois st Elois. I immediately assembled about three platoons and formed them in a skirmish line behind a ridge in front of the Bois des Glandes*. I then found a company of Engineers and ordered them to go in support of the three platoons. I reported my operation to a Major of the 16th Inf and turned over the detachment to him. With his permission I went up on a patrol to see how far the enemy had advanced and found that they had made a local raid on our front line. When everything quieted down I assembled my detail and completed the work in the "Jumping Off" trench. Later in the day Pvt. McDonald(Chas) was wounded in the leg, supposedly by an areoplane bullet. Nothing further of importance happened during the day.

The guides led the company into position without a hitch on the night of May 27/28. No casualties during the bombardment before the attack. At zero hour the platoon "Jumped Off" and quickly established the attack formation. I lost one or two men wounded in the advance by machine gun fire. The platoon captured one machine gun with a quantity of ammunition. I turned the gun over to a Machine gun Sergeant attached to my platoon, ordered him to reverse it and put it in to action. The platoon captured several prisoners and sent them to the rear,- at least twelve men were sent in. In the advance many of the enemy were killed. On reaching the objective, outposts were immediately put forward and the platoon began to digin. Just as the digging began a machine gun barrage was put down and this caused 12 casualties in my platoon. Things went well until 4 oclock in the afternoon when the enemy began bombing our position. About six oclock it became much heavier and word was passed down the trench that Liut. WARD (or some such name) ordered us to evacuate at once. Not knowing who Lieut Ward was or with what authority he gave such an order, I ordered my men to stand fast, and stand guard for an approach of the enemy. I immediately passed word down the trench asking who Lieut Ward was, and with what authority he had issued the order. I received no reply, whereupon I went myself to the right of the Company sector to find him and determine if he had authority to issue the order. I found no Lieut Ward, but was told by some men that a Lieut. had retreated to the rear with a number of men immedialtely on the right of the sector. I found Lieut Morris on the right of our sector, I consulted him and we decided to remain in position until something more serious

happened or we had the proper authority to withdraw. Whereupon I returned to my post and found that some one had led the company to the rear, without calling in the outposts. I then went out to the outposts, and found them discharging their duties faithfully, with some dead and some wounded in the posts. The positions were in full view of the enemy and it seemed an impossibility to evacuate the wounded in daylight. I explained to the post that the company had retired but that I was going out to find it and bring it back into the original position, and ordered them to hold out until the wounded were evacuated, or in case the enemy came on them they were not to abandon the wounded until it was impossible to save them without all being captured. I went back to the front line, then down through "L" Co's sector but could find no one. From there I went to Bn. Hq. and could not find the company. I reported to the C.O. He ordered me to round up all the stragglers and report to Capt. Jack I found about 25 men from various organizations, supplied them with ammunition and reported.

May 28, 1918, and the American casualties were over 1,000 dead and more than 4,000 wounded. The reports from this period of time illustrate how the model of a daily operations report from the Ansauville Sector influenced the communications during and after the Cantigny battle. For instance, there are daily operations reports that share the general characteristics of the day to miscellaneous data in a very objective way. Genre change, however, is never a straightforward or uncluttered process. From this same period of time, we also see personal testimony from a lieutenant on the operations against Cantigny. This report uses personal pronouns and is very *narrativesque*. In a time of exponential growth within the army and the corresponding communication, we see that the reports of the First Division in World War I are in flux.

Towards the end of the war, when the fighting moved near the St. Mihiel Salient east of Paris, in September 1918, the reports of the First Division appear to have become fully objective in tone. During the action surrounding the St. Mihiel Salient, the First Division eradicated the German position at the cost of only 93 American deaths and 441 wounded. The reports from this event showcase how special operations reports are now being fully used. For instance, the special operations report from St. Mihiel explains the overall operations in a very objective tone. Why was this tone being used? Perhaps the rhetorician could say that the objective tone from these documents stems from the point in the war when so many men were dying. But, on the other hand, during the action surrounding the St. Mihiel Salient, only 93 men were killed. Perhaps at this point in the war, use of an objective tone had already become the norm and so a personal narrative was not favored? Whatever the cause, the special operations report seems to have fully emerged at the time of this event, yet there appears to be no daily operations reports, just as in the time period of the combat near Soissons.

The rhetorician has to wonder why there are no daily operations reports from St. Mihiel, which would have used an objective tone, since the special operations report obviously uses similar qualities of objectivity. Oftentimes, scholars in our field like to argue that using an objective voice is done on purpose—as discussed earlier. Yet, I believe my study illustrates that sometimes there is a larger exigency and purpose when using an objective tone. In my study's case, not only was the war itself a huge exigency, since it was a very chaotic period of time, but there was also another exigency with

the larger purpose of pushing for standardization within the reports, which served to expedite actions, movements, and policies during the hostilities.

In order to communicate these actions, movements, and policies, the First Division needed a way to objectively communicate events so that a consistent tone would be present within all the documents. For instance, if an officer wrote a daily operations report in an objective voice, like during Cantigny, then that information might be more understandable to other officers when compared to writing in a conversational way. Additionally, if officers wanted to write another document regarding the actions during Cantigny, they would be able to pull together these various written reports easily and efficiently. As discussed earlier, businesses of the early twentieth century developed a *corporate voice* in their documents, and I would argue that the First Division was developing their own *Army voice* during World War I. The rhetorician can imagine the usefulness of the interchangeable features of an Army voice during a time of conflict and pressure.

Composite Picture

After the St. Mihiel Salient, the First Division participated in the last event before the Armistice, on November 11, 1918. This last battle, the Meuse-Argonne, was one of the bloodiest in American history. The First Division alone suffered over 1,500 dead and nearly 6,000 wounded. The reports following this event definitely demonstrate how the communication of the First Division in World War I adapted and changed. For the first time since Cantigny, the daily operations report surfaces again. As readers look at this type of report from the Meuse-Argonne period, they will see the familiar time frame surface, except that it is framed from noon to noon instead of 10 a.m. to 10 a.m. (see Figure 4, p. 50).

After the daily operations report, a special operations report on the Meuse-Argonne follows in the records of the First Division. It is important to note that this report was written after the Armistice, on November 24, 1918, in Luxembourg. But the last part of it, nonetheless, lists the summary and conclusions from the offensive. Why? Perhaps the army realized that such a special operations report would be useful for future reference. The fact that the documents dealing with

Figure 4

Daily operations report from Meuse-Argonne, Dated Oct. 1, 1918

the action from the Meuse-Argonne utilize both the daily operations report and special operations report in their corresponding format and tone highlight the composite picture of the records during the last major battle of World War I.

After the war was over, there was a memo issued that called for finding missing documents in order to complete the records of the First Division (see Figure 5, p. 51).

Figure 5

Memo about lost reports, dated April 20, 1919.
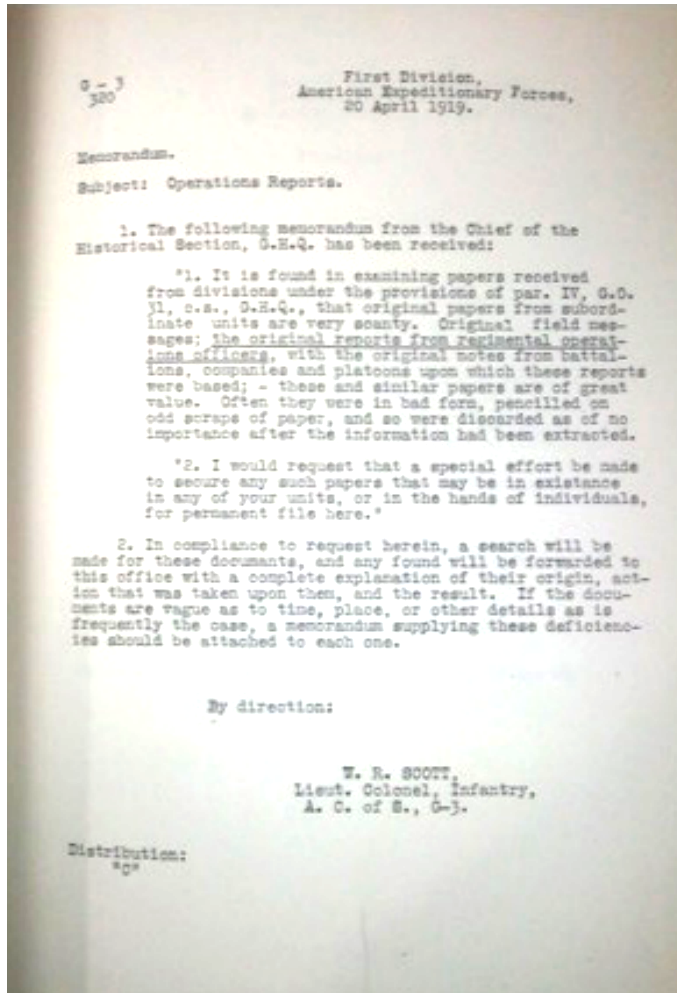
Perhaps the division realized that the missing reports served, not only to expedite actions, movements, and policies during the hostilities, but could also serve as records of the war for future generations. For instance, the publication of the First Division records of the First Division was released on March 6, 1928, approximately ten years after the Armistice.

There were limited copies of these records available since they were mainly used by officers training at the war colleges of the Army. One complete set now resides in the archives of the National World War I Museum for those interested in them, today.

By looking at these reports and noting that the First Division commented on how some of these reports are missing, my research findings illustrate that the messiness of genre change resulted in both daily operations reports and special operations reports of the First Division during the course of World War I as the army expanded in size.

Through these three topics, the rhetorician can see how the First Division was using communication to control the format, tone, and overall picture of World War I records. Yates would suggest that these controls were enacted by both "downward" and "upward" communication (p. 6). In my study's case, the downward communication served the purpose of dictating information to others within the organization. For instance, the memo from General Bullard that outlines how daily operations reports should be written is a prime example of such downward communication. On the other hand, upward communication is enacted by the lieutenants and other officers who wrote the daily operations reports and special operations reports for Division Headquarters. Through my study, the rhetorician can see the sorts of actions that the U.S. Army was attempting to control through changes in the communication.

Lessons Learned

What are the lessons that the rhetorician can then take away from the findings of my study? The rhetorician can learn that the genealogy of genre may appear messy in the archive or elsewhere, but the complex relationships involved with how the genre was changing provide an opportunity for us to learn about genreology. It is in that messiness that scholars can find interesting and useful things to say, such as:

(1) *How military reports evolved to become standardized during World War I.*
In our field, military communications is an overlooked area of research. The connection between war and business during World War I, therefore, presents new insight into how changes in communication occurred during the early twentieth century. As discussed earlier, the influence of civilian business communication is well documented, especially by Yates. Yet, the connection to the communication of war does not seem prevalent in our field. I think that such a connection is very important.

(2) *How interested scholars can learn how genre changes over a certain time period.*
Researchers interested in genre are curious about how genre changes and adapts to social action. My study used the sociocultural approach to genre, as outlined earlier, while also contributing to the theory with my term *genreology* (the *genealogy* of the *genre*). To do so, I focused on how the reports at the beginning of the war compare to the reports found at the end of the conflict. Such an approach will extend the sociocultural theory, influenced by Miller, to consider how social action influences genre during a specific time period. I hope, through my research, that I have mapped a genreology of the U.S. Army records from World War I. While such a task seemed complicated, I think that this area of study has illustrated the complex ways in which the records from World War I adapted during a time of conflict and change never before seen by the world.

(3) *How we communicate within organizations today.*
Another aspect of genre research is to use what we learn from scholarship to better understand the way in which we communicate today. Queries into the way the U.S. Army has communicated in the past might help initiate future studies on the classified records from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While military communication is important to study, I also think that considering other historical areas of professional communication would equally lend itself to a study of genreology. I think that more examples on the roots and development of professional communication will help enrich both the classroom and the field. ■

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Focused commentary and Industry perspectives

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM: NEMESIS OR NECESSITY?

Corporate America weighs in
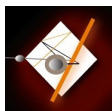
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Social media skills are required by many businesses today, worldwide. The classroom provides a rich opportunity to practice and explore interpersonal communication with technologies used in the business world. Business writing instructors can harness their students' talent with social media and show them how to apply those skills in workplace settings. Business professionals, who are intimately familiar with current business practices, can offer guidance to instructors about the types of social media skills their students are expected to know. By introducing business needs in an academic setting, a relationship is forged that helps create college graduates with more marketable skills and an insight to the inner-workings of the world beyond college. Experts from multinational corporations IBM, Best Buy, McDonald's, and Groupon offer their opinions about the types of social media and interpersonal communication skills they would like to see in college graduates.

Keywords. Social media, Business writing, Online interpersonal skills, Workplace readiness, Social media writing strategies, Teaching social media skills.

As the first half of class comes to a close and you release the students for a break, are you amazed that only a couple of students stir from their chairs? Are you mildly amused when the prayerful congregation sitting in front of you drops their chins to their chests and puts their hands together, cradling tiny electronic devices? Are you slightly envious of the speed in which their thumbs can move, only to be further perplexed with the thought that they are actually composing text at that rate? This ceaseless texting,

emailing and Facebook-checking behavior that occurs in our classroom is worrisome to many, but these same skills are required by numerous businesses today. Teaching students appropriate applications of social media skills will make them more marketable and ultimately, will empower them with interpersonal skills that are appropriate to the communication events encountered in today's business world.

The key for business communication educators is to recognize the students' talent for social media, and harness this common student-based skill. Business professionals, who are familiar with current business practices, can offer guidance to instructors about the types of social media skills their students are expected to know. The classroom provides a rich opportunity to practice and explore interpersonal communication with technologies in use at home and at work. By introducing business needs in an academic setting, a relationship is forged that helps create college graduates with more marketable skills and an insight to the inner-workings of the world beyond college. As a result, graduates successfully compete for jobs with some of the skills required on the job, acquired before they get the job.

Corporate Teams, Tools, and Interpersonal Skills

Corporate environments in which collaboration and team-building occur are found within social media communities that are specifically tailored to the needs of the workgroup. IBM products provide workgroup support tools that recreate mainstream environments like Facebook, offering social communities and collaborative groups. The IBM product, Lotus Connections, is one example of these interactive products. Boutin (2010) refers to it as "Facebook for Work" and explains, "IBM thinks social networking isn't just for fun—it can also make companies more efficient." The "Activities" component of Lotus Connections makes it easy to track work, share tasks with others in a professional network, manage team to-do's, and discover and share best practices by creating "activity templates" (Boutin). Obviously, with products like this readily available, technologically-driven team management tools have become a commonplace practice in many companies. As the business culture shifts to these new practices, discussions centered on communication competence arise, as well.

With ongoing technological advancements like Lotus Connections, that make professional online communication more dominant than in-person communication

events, debates abound that center on the erosion of in-person communication skills. Qualman (2011) asserts that the worst thing about social media is that "some people start to hide behind social media and their interpersonal communication skills diminish." (p. 272). On the other hand, Jue, Marr, and Kassotakis (2010) interviewed Cisco's curriculum planning and deployment lead, Greg Brower, who argues that the collaborative benefit of social media "engages employees in sharing knowledge and expertise" (p. 75). It can be argued that online sharing of knowledge and expertise requires skillful interpersonal communication skills. Interviews with several business experts who oversee corporate communications confirm this view.

Corporate Professionals Shed Light

IBM

In a phone conversation with Julie Brown, an IBM Lotus Notes Information Developer, she expressed that the focus for writers at work is on the audience and how to best connect with them (J. Brown, phone interview, June 7, 2011). Online communication is the norm for everyday interactions, including emailing, blogging, instant messaging, collaborating in internal social media communities, and using Facebook (2011). She discussed a "trial and error" approach in balancing between personal and professional identities, highlighting that this balancing act is a necessary interpersonal communication skill in all mediums, whether on the phone, in Facebook, or face-to-face.

She furthered the point by talking about proper etiquette and the dangers of interrupting the person on the other end of the communication exchange. Whether online or in-person, she said it is critical to listen well and practice using appropriate tone and language based on the particular audience. She regularly communicates with international audiences, specifically from China and India. Cultural and language differences require thoughtful sensitivity to be successful in those communications. She emphasized that it is very important, on both personal and business levels, to not accidentally insult audience members with inappropriate language or poorly written texts. While technology like instant messaging requires fast-paced typing that can

sometimes end without clear closure, in-person encounters can be just as awkward if the cultural expectations are unknown.

Another concern faced by IBM employees is the writer's representation of the company through the social media communication (J. Brown, phone interview, June 7, 2011). Often, companies provide training on how to create business-approved responses but, in rapid-fire settings, responses are not always fully contemplated, revised, and proofread. In this context, writers have to learn to craft a different type of presence compared to personal interactions on the Web. Without a doubt, whether the communication takes place through a technological medium or not, the requirements of successful communication are the same: a strong focus on and knowledge of the audience, well-written texts, courteousness, sincerity, and respect.

Best Buy

Gina Debogovich, Director and Social Media Leader at Best Buy, is clear about how to manage employees when dealing with customers (G. Debogovich, phone interview, December 13, 2010). In an online presentation that outlines the Best Buy philosophy to using social media, their approach is simple: "Social Media Policy: Be Smart, Be Respectful, Be Human" (2011). This philosophy was discussed in detail during a phone interview with Debogovich where she highlighted skills needed by today's college graduates. She placed an emphasis on writing well, writing succinctly, showing some personality within the writing, and the added bonus of having a grasp of gaming slang and terminology. She further stated that "most successful employees may not be social media savvy, but they can write great content and know how to talk to customers" (G. Debogovich, phone interview, December 13, 2010).

Debogovich explained that personal pictures are embedded with the employee's ID account in Twitter—through Best Buy's Twelpforce, "a collective force of Best Buy technology pros offering tech advice in Tweet form"—so the customer can connect with a person's face; this makes the communication more personal than when speaking to someone over the phone (Twelpforce). Trust and respect gradually emerge in the short, 140-character communications, resulting in effective interpersonal communication events. Arguably, something much more powerful occurs in the overtly simplistic series of Tweets: a human bond is forged.

This recurrent theme from business professionals is reasserted by Hartman and McCambridge's (2011) focus on the interactive process of communication and the need to help college students develop their interpersonal skills. Today's business communication student must learn how to accurately target a specific audience, and provide it with solutions that work. Hartman and McCambridge highlight two relevant and important teachable goals: "(1) business educators must help Millennials move toward a more audience-focused orientation and away from a primary focus on themselves, and (2) business educators must help Millennials become more focused on people rather than just focusing on technology" (p. 28). To achieve these goals, business communication instructors can incorporate workplace practices into curricular activities.

Current Trends and Uses of Social Media in Higher Education

A simple Google search reveals numerous sources that cite sound reasons for using social media in the classroom. Included in relevant discussions of the use of social media in today's classrooms, Barseghian (2011) argues for its usage due to the collaborative nature of the environment, the importance of the instructor having some technological knowledge, and blending classroom efforts to include the use of technology in lesson plans.

Furthermore, Johnson et al. explain the relevance of the social media trend as follows:

> As social networks continue to flourish, educators are using them as professional communities of practice, as learning communities, and as a platform to share interesting stories about topics students are studying in class. Understanding how social media can be leveraged for social learning is a key skill for teachers, and teacher training programs are increasingly being expected to include this skill (NMC Horizon Report, 2014, p. 10).

Recruiting and retaining students is critical to the success of higher education institutions, and instructors hold a key role by becoming more technologically engaged in their course plans. Informal brown-bag lunch settings are appropriate and convenient environments for an experienced instructor to lead an interested group of social media novices. Many instructors are currently using social media to connect with other academic communities—both inside and outside the university—manage their class

documents and their communication with students, and share electronic media, such as podcasts and videos.

Google has a plethora of tools that are free and easy to access for classroom environments. They also offer easy-to-follow instructions to those who are interested in using the products, i.e. Digital Literacy for Educators. Some examples of Google tools for education include, but are not limited to, the following: Google Docs, Google Apps, and Google Maps—Google Earth Outreach has a variety of free versions of tools. Bernard Gulachek, the Sr. Technology Director at the University of Minnesota states: "With Google Apps, we have the brains and insights of Google and the entire Google Apps community to help us update our communication and collaboration solutions on a continuous basis – and this innovation comes at no extra charge" (Google).

While trends in social media tools used in the classroom will come and go, instructors have many options available to help them meet their teaching goals for today's business writing students. For the most part, students are eager and excited to learn about today's online tools and how to use them appropriately before entering the job market.

Lessons from the Classroom

Corporate social media power users appear united in the opinion that, to satisfy today's customers, businesses must create professional online identities and stay abreast of their presence on social media websites. This requires diligent monitoring of their written content and their Web identities. Many college students cannot remember a time without publishing their words on the Web, and they are comfortable with digitally-public identities. Often, they are fluent in texting, gaming, and posting in Facebook.

Additionally, employers expect graduates to have strong writing and social media skills when they enter the workforce so they can interact with customers where customers interact. Unfortunately, business communication instructors often assume that students already have the appropriate social media skills. While students may have experience with the technologies, they do not have extensive practice in the concurrent interpersonal communication skills required in a business setting. This disconnect provides a prime opportunity for technologically-driven lesson plans that offer practice with online interpersonal communication skills that are expected of students when

they graduate and enter the workplace. Creation of a fictitious online company with students assuming different roles—some within the company and others that are external to the company, i.e., customers—enables exploration of internal and external online communication in a business setting. Through the lens of the fictitious company, students engage in meaningful discussions of audience analysis and the subsequent practice of writing for different audiences, with the company's goals and solid writing skills driving their simulated online exchanges.

One of the cocreators of Twitter, Dom Sagolla, wrote a companion text to educate Twitter users about the language of the tool. Sagolla's book (2009), 140 Characters: A Style Guide for the Short Form, is an informative exploration of the linguistic conventions used in social media platforms like Twitter. Sagolla's book functions as a how-to guide that covers all of the traditional aspects of good writing: audience analysis, persuasive techniques, style, grammar, and self-expression, to name a few. This new short form writing style is a skill that instructors can easily incorporate in their classroom assignments. Activities centered on the differences between traditional media—i.e. professional business letters—and today's Twitter texts, or Tweets, help students examine the pros and cons of each. In a specific class activity, I reiterate one of my student learning outcomes from my course syllabus, specifically: employ appropriate writing strategies to respond to the needs of readers in various contexts. I tell my classes that the word contexts includes technological contexts, as well.

In my business communication course, I conduct one activity where students write formal complaint letters to the Better Business Bureau (BBB). The entire activity, including the Twitter element, is entirely hypothetical. They prepare text for a Twitter post, but they do not actually submit it online. They follow all the conventions of traditional business letter writing to be sent via snail mail, voicing their grievance about a company's product or service. Then, they create a response that conveys the highlights of the formal BBB letter as a 140 character tweet that they could post on Twitter. I have also taken a similar approach by having students write a formal response—in the form of an adjustment letter—to an unhappy customer, as if the students were representing the business. I often have students work in groups of 2-3 to create a response to a writing prompt found in Mary Ellen Guffey's book (2010), Essentials of Business Communication. The prompt reads as follows: "When a company received an

expensive office painting with sags in the canvas, it complained. The seller, Manhattan Galleries, responded with [an] adjustment letter" (p. 153). Next, Guffey directs students to create a list of issues with the sample adjustment letter provided in the textbook. After creating a list of weaknesses with the text's adjustment letter, I have students write their own response to the disgruntled customer, in the form of a business letter. The following text is one group's letter:

> Dear Ms. Nickels:
>
> It appears that you have received a product from our company that you are not completely satisfied with, reporting that there is sagging in the canvas. One of the things we pride ourselves on is distributing a quality product, and we apologize that this instance has occurred. There is a possibility that the alteration to the product happened during the shipping process, but we cannot confirm that, so we take responsibility for what has happened.
>
> We encourage you to take the canvas into one of the local framing shops in your area, contact us, and we will cover the charge in full. Providing a quality product for our customers is of utmost importance to our company, and we hope that you will consider us again next time when purchasing a canvas.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> *Name*
>
> Title
>
> Phone number

Next, they were asked to create language they could post on Twitter—140 characters, or less—as if they were writing an online response to the complaint that was hypothetically posted on Manhattan Galleries' Twitter feed. To help students who were unfamiliar with Twitter, I showed them Best Buy's Twelpforce online Twitter feed, and discussed the pros and cons of this form of communication with customers. Then, I asked the class to read Twitter feeds of businesses they frequent, and create a list of observations to share with the class.

In the next class period, the students discussed their Twitter observations in small groups, and each group presented one observation to the entire class. Most of the students did not have familiarity with Twitter—or that type of communication channel, in general—that is used by many businesses today. However, they quickly took to the task of creating responses to the unhappy customer in Twitter format. The class

discussion focused on the global readership, as compared to the individual audience in the adjustment letter. In authoring the tweets, their rhetorical goals changed from simply fixing the faulty product to including messages of good will to promote their business to a global audience.

The following is the Twitter response provided by the same group who wrote the letter mentioned earlier. They assumed that the customer had tweeted her complaint, so they tweeted back to her the following:

> Apologize for the damaged product! Our mistake. Allow us to pay for the repairs at your local framing store #WeCare4OurCustomers#You Matter

Additional examples of Twitter responses created by student groups are presented below, as follows:

> @snickels We are sorry to hear about your painting! We will fix your issue for FREE!! Here is a FREE $50 gift card for the inconvenience!!

> We apologize for canvasing issues with our paintings on delivery. Attached is a 10% off coupon for your entire purchase! #canvas#print#loyalty

> @snickels Your canvas is on its way. We are investigating further packaging options to prevent further occurrences in the future.

> @SharonNickels We're sorry, feel free to take the painting to your local framing shop for restretching. #Manhattan will reimburse you 100%!

> @SharonN We apologize4our faulty product, we will fix the canvas freeofcharge. We learn from our mistakes & strive for customersatisfaction

When presented in tandem, the formal business letter proved to be a very different writing challenge compared to the 140-character customer complaints they created for a Twitter post. Interestingly, instead of focusing on the difficulties in writing the formal letter, the class verbalized amazement in the difficulty to create adequate text for their short tweets. They commented that they felt the writer of the tweet had to be more direct and careful since it was sent to a global audience. They discussed how the public response in Twitter communications made them feel a stronger obligation to "do what's right" for the customer since a global audience would be silently judging

them. They acknowledged that "bad news travels faster" in Twitter and the faster the business responds to the complaint, the better. Students actually felt that social media provides a better platform for writers to show off their customer service skills and that, in turn, challenges them to write more effectively than in the traditional formats. They liked the potential rapidity of problem identification and resolution that a quick tweet provides. As an instructor, it was pleasing to hear the repeated chorus that the Twitter author "still has to be a good writer." The students echoed the opinions of the business professionals cited earlier that strong writing skills are necessary for successful online communication.

Classroom exploration of appropriate expression of the personal self and the professional self within the context of writing in Twitter helps bridge students from the recreational use of social media to the workplace use of the same tools. Basic guidelines, or philosophical tenets, that I use in class when teaching with social media, include the following:

(1) *Nice and slow!* If new to social media, introduce social media gradually to a class and only to the extent that the instructor feels comfortable.

(2) *Watch and learn!* Explore technological tools first by having students observe the activity of others using the online tool, i.e., by following their favorite store's Twitter feed.

(3) *Student learning is paramount!* Explain how the use of the online activities will help them meet the student learning outcomes defined in the course syllabus, and explain the goals of the assignment so students will better understand what they need to do to succeed.

(4) *Rhetorical strategies come to life!* When writing a response to a customer complaint, students learn the traditional triad of audience, purpose, and context. Asking them to condense the response to 140 characters or less—for a different audience, purpose, and context—empowers them with a stronger consideration of their rhetorical choices.

(5) *Collaboration creates partnerships!* Idea sharing and communicating with others in a professional setting can be difficult to simulate in the classroom.

Providing social media activities in class allows for practice before students are expected to perform the skills on the job.

(6) ***Be flexible!*** By teaching the writing strategies necessary for social media sites, even the more inexperienced tech users will be able to contribute, if they have pen and paper writing tasks. Furthermore, it can be productive for some students, perhaps ones less comfortable in social media environments—i.e., Twitter—to create a traditional adjustment letter and then hand-write a Twitter response. In addition to potentially lowering the risk of intimidation for such students, this approach helps them examine the rhetorical differences between the two written forms of communication.

I have found that classroom activities where students brainstorm on the ramifications of acceptable and unacceptable online content are quite meaningful in the context of lessons that are focused on the job hunt. The importance of knowing what to keep private in an online personal identity becomes very clear when studying the practices of today's recruiters.

Recruiters and employers regularly scour the Web for information on prospective interviewees. Students quickly identify the devastating effects of a personal indiscretion captured online when a prospective employer never contacts them for an interview. All their hard work, revision, and editing of career documents are unproductive due to the online evidence found by the hiring manager's quick and simple Google search. In a situation like this, all the interpersonal communication skills in the world cannot overcome the negative first impression made online to a prospective employer. However, if the employer decides to take a chance and interview the candidate after all, we have an obligation to our students to prepare them with the persuasive techniques available to them to rectify the online disparity.

It is within this verbal context that, at times, rehearsed explanations regarding personal indiscretions that have been found online can save the day and, hopefully, get our college graduates hired. Just as Julie Brown suggested, finding the balance between personal and professional identities in online communication is challenging, but necessary (J. Brown, phone interview, June 7, 2011).

Conclusion

The ability to communicate within personal and professional identities is enhanced, and made more difficult, by the need to communicate in multiple media. Interpersonal communication demands ongoing adaptability in today's communication transactions. Nardi, Whittaker, and Bradner (2010), describe the practice of "media switching" when a communicator begins in one medium, i.e., online chatting, and then decides to call or email the person they are chatting with (p.114). The reasons for the move to a different medium are varied, but they all focus on the need for further "interaction" due to the conversation being "complicated," or if there was a lack of clarity in the chat environment (Nardi et al., 2010, p. 115).

Face-to-face interpersonal communication skills are expected in some communication events, while dynamic, technologically-driven skills are required in others. By structuring learning opportunities for students to practice all of these skills, we enable them to have a competitive edge as job candidates and well-earned rewards, in the future, as stellar employees. Without a doubt, they will flourish as professionals who conduct modern, day-to-day business, undaunted by the technologies they use or the accompanying communication interactions required by today's workplace culture. ∎

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Teaching cases

THE POTENTIAL OF METAPHOR IN ESL PEDAGOGY
A Pilot Case Study

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Metaphor is an underutilized resource in second-language pedagogy. While metaphor's role in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms has been the subject of research, most studies acknowledge its use only as a means to increase vocabulary retention. This pilot case study acknowledges metaphor's potential in that capacity, but goes further and asks how it might also foster cross-cultural awareness and empathy. This qualitative study employed open-ended questionnaires to inquire into metaphor's inclusion into a private ESL school for university students in a Texas town. The aim was to gauge metaphor's formal or informal integration into the curriculum, and its pedagogical efficacy from the perspective of students, instructors, and administrators. The results suggest active incorporation of metaphor into ESL classrooms stimulates student learning by opening spaces for cross-cultural discussion, and goes further to suggest advocating for metaphor's inclusion in professional learning and communicative settings.

Keywords. ESL pedagogy, Metaphor, Second Language Learning, Intercultural communication.

Metaphor derives from the Greek *meta*, expressing change, and *pherein*, meaning *to carry* (Lazar, 1996). In other words, a metaphor is a *carrying across* of meaning from one object to another. At a basic cognitive level, metaphor simply refers to thinking of one thing in terms of another one. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) began what has become a cross- and interdisciplinary conversation about metaphor's makeup, its use, and its epistemological potential. Baake (2003), for instance, explores metaphor in science writing. His research
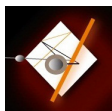
into a theoretical-science think tank lends interesting insight into even the reliance of science on metaphor. Research has shown that human inquiry and communication cannot be divorced from metaphorical ways-of-knowing.

A growing body of research contextualizes the power of metaphor in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) pedagogy (Boers, 2000; Deignan et al., 1997; Lazar, 1996; Littlemore, 2001, 2004, 2006). Most inquiries into metaphor's potential as a teaching tool in ESL classrooms have focused on its power to increase vocabulary retention (Boers, 2000; Lazar, 1996; Littlemore, 2004). Deignan et al. (1997) is the sole study yet concerned with the application of metaphor in ESL contexts in order to stimulate and facilitate what they term *cross-linguistic awareness-raising*. The present research builds on their work by distributing questionnaires to university-aged foreign students enrolled in a private English language learning institution. The results and implications are summarized thus:

(a) metaphor is currently under-utilized as a resource in some ESL curricula;

(b) active incorporation of metaphor could yield productive ESL learning outcomes; and

(c) metaphor-based language learning might be utilized in international professional communication contexts.

Metaphor's potential as a learning facilitator is discussed below—but first, a review of the literature.

A Review of Literature

Metaphor as an ESL pedagogical tool is not new, but its suggested application has been narrow. Past research has argued that the best potential for metaphor in ESL classrooms relates to vocabulary retention. Lazar (1996) was the first to argue that figurative language, and metaphor in particular, are often neglected, and could be better employed so students retain more words. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) provide many examples of metaphorical propositions around which vocabulary and expressions can be clustered. Lazar draws on their work to assert that "grouping vocabulary in lexical sets is now an established procedure in the teaching of vocabulary," and it might also "be useful for their vocabulary-building skills if students were encouraged to group

vocabulary around metaphorical sets" (1996, p. 44–45). Doing so may help students remember better because metaphor understanding is a complex cognitive process that fosters memorization. Understanding figurative language involves a process of inference, and "decoding" figurative language involves a number of states (Lazar 1996, p. 46). In progressing through these states, such a pedagogical argument asserts, the learner must comprehend how two usually disparate things are brought together, deduce what features apply to both, and work out how the application of their commonalities and differences inform one another. Such a process burns the metaphor and its associated terms—vocabulary—into students' minds.

Boers (2000) extended Lazar's work with three ESL experiments indicating the same:

> if metaphor is so omnipresent in everyday language, then language learners are bound to be confronted with figurative discourse at various stages of the learning process . . . mastering conventional figurative language must be an inherent part of the language learning process too (Boers, 2000, p. 553).

The nature of figurative language is such, writes Boers, that it can often be traced back to a limited number of metaphoric themes or source domains. Enhancing students' "metaphor awareness" (p. 562) apparently facilitates ESL education naturally, because figurative language is built upon *domains* or *themes* common to all languages.

Lazar and Boer suggest including metaphor into ESL pedagogy because, by fostering these linguistic relationships, it heightens "associative fluency" (Littlemore, 2004, p. 267). Associative fluency refers to one's ability to make a wide range of connections when presented with a given stimulus. In making connections between metaphoric themes, ESL students are required to use analogical reasoning and conjure mental imagery—two practices that increase *metaphoric intelligence* (Littlemore, 2001). Such an intelligence refers to "the capacity of language users to create and understand novel linguistic combinations that may be literal nonsense" (Littlemore, 2001, p. 2). Using metaphor in ESL classrooms, then, may heighten students' associative fluency and metaphoric intelligence, which can lead to improved language learning. To extend this research, Littlemore and Low (2006) extrapolated on target versus source domains—semantic fields that represent the parties interacting in metaphor. They note

that a connection between the two domains is made either explicitly by the author, or implicitly by the reader's inferences. Native speakers will, of course, make metaphorical connections more easily and more quickly—the difficulty in translation of novel, other-culture metaphors forces second-language learners to exert more effort and, subsequently, make more lasting neural connections.

Littlemore and Low (2006) also focus on the distinction between conceptual and linguistic metaphors. Conceptual metaphors—usually codified in research by using ALL CAPS—refer to the "abstract, underlying relationship(s) between the two concepts or entities" (p. 5). Linguistic metaphors, on the other hand, refer to the words that *dress* conceptual metaphors. For example, the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT underlies linguistic metaphors such as "hot under the collar" and "being fired up." Building on Lazar, Boers, and Littlemore's earlier work, Littlemore and Low's (2006) research demonstrates, at a more granular level, that "if teachers systematically draw the attention of language learners to the *source domains of linguistic metaphors* and of vocabulary involving metaphor, then learners' depth of knowledge for that language, and their ability to retain it can improve significantly" (p. 7, italics mine).

Rationale and Research Questions

Although research suggests metaphor can be of use to ESL educators, it has taken a long time for the idea to be applied to "make significant headway into mainstream pedagogical practice and the design of teaching materials" (Littlemore and Low, 2006, p. 4). Perhaps this is because too much focus has been laid on metaphor's use only as a fulcrum for vocabulary retention. Despite clear theoretical implications and inroads, not enough attention has been paid to the empathic power of metaphor in developing cross-cultural awareness.

Boers (2000) and Lazar (1996) emphasize that figurative language, including metaphor, is related to culture. Metaphors vary across cultures (Boers, 2000, p. 553), and "the kinds of figurative language we use stems from the underlying values and assumptions of our culture or society: a well-understood metaphor in one culture may have entirely different meanings in another part of the world" (Lazar, 1996, p. 46). However, Boers and Lazar refer to variation among linguistic metaphors, not conceptual metaphors. Similar forms of figurative meaning—i.e., understood relationships between things,

conceptual metaphor—are found across cultures. In the case of RESPONSIBILITY IS HEAVY (conceptual metaphor), for example, many cultures might relate responsibility to weight in some way. That doesn't necessarily mean, though, that all cultures have linguistic metaphors similar to "weight of the world on my shoulders" or "monkey on my back." But, cultures may value linguistic metaphors that dress the conceptual metaphor differently, while, in other instances, they do not favor such distinctions.

Either way, the cross-cultural comparison of the idea is intellectually stimulating, opening space for language and cultural learning. The complexity of metaphor, in the context of shared meaning within and across cultures, elicits some interesting questions. How is metaphor being used in ESL pedagogy? How often do both conceptual and linguistic metaphors *translate* across cultures and languages? And how could metaphor be more actively employed to facilitate cross-cultural understanding in both academic and professional contexts? These are the questions this pilot case study sets out to address.

Methods

I used open-ended questionnaires to answer the research questions above. During research, I was enrolled in an Intercultural Communication graduate course, for which I participated in service learning at a private ESL educational institution in a Texas town. The working relationship developed during this time helped me establish rapport, culminating in the present study. I distributed the questionnaires below to advanced students, instructors, and staff at the English language-learning center—ELLC, a pseudonym—to gauge how, if at all, the center actively incorporated metaphor into its advanced curriculum. I decided to focus research on advanced ELLC students, as literature suggests introducing metaphor-based instruction in beginner or intermediate classes only hinders learning. This outcome results because the grammatical and syntactical aspects of metaphor, sometimes even the word choice involved, increases complexity and convolutes understanding at those stages of the learning process (Boers, 2000; Littlemore, 2004; Lazar, 1996).

Questionnaire for ELLC students

1. What country are you from?
2. What is your first language?
3. How long have you been studying English?
4. How many classes have you taken at ELLC?
5. Do you know what 'metaphor' means in English?
6. Do you have a similar term in your own language?
7. Are there differences between 'metaphor' and the closest term in your native language?
8. What English-language metaphors are you familiar with, if any?
9. How did you learn about those metaphors—did an instructor address them in class, a classmate tell you about them, you make the connection independently, etc.?
10. What metaphors do you use in your home country (translated into English)?
11. Do you think talking about or discussing metaphor aids in language learning? If so, how?

Questionnaire for ELLC administrators and instructors

1. Is metaphor incorporated into the ELLC curriculum?   Yes   No
2. If yes:
    a. What student-skill level courses is it used in?
    b. Is it explicitly incorporated (i.e. lessons about metaphor or lessons specifically addressing metaphor)? If so, how is it employed or incorporated?
    c. Are there certain metaphors that are regularly addressed/used? Which ones?
    d. Do you think metaphor could be a valuable tool for second-language pedagogy? If yes, how so?
3. If no:
    a. Do you find yourself using metaphor in the classroom to illustrate other concepts, even though it's not in the curriculum? If so, how?
    b. Are there other, similar, concepts (i.e. analogy, idiom, aphorism) that are incorporated into the curriculum?
    c. Do you think that including lessons about metaphor, or incorporating metaphor, would be valuable to the ELLC curriculum? ☐ Yes ☐ No
    d. If so, what skill-level students would benefit the most? Why?

Upon distributing and receiving back the questionnaires, it became apparent that metaphor, although not officially a part of the ELLC curriculum, found its ways into the classroom, anyway. A unit in the advanced section's curriculum at the ELLC includes extensive discussions about other kinds of figurative language, in particular

idioms. In sitting in classes for the service learning component, I observed metaphor being discussed in relation to various English-language idioms, which often employ metaphoric language. The questionnaires confirmed that the ELLC students are, indeed, exposed to metaphor. In fact, even though the curriculum did not explicitly include metaphor discussion or activities, several students implied that instructors injected metaphor into classes; instructor questionnaire responses confirmed this outcome.

Results and Analysis

Eleven ELLC students—one advanced class section—completed the student questionnaire. Eight respondents were Saudi Arabian, two were from Equatorial Guinea, and one from Nicaragua. All of them had been studying English for at least one year, and all of them had completed at least four one-month terms at the ELLC. According to their responses, they all know what metaphor means in English, and confirmed that they have similar terms in their native languages (L1s). Also, all of the student respondents were aware of one or more English-language metaphors, but only those that an ELLC instructor had introduced to them. Each of the 11 respondents identified one or both of the following English-language metaphors as ones they are familiar with: "all the world's a stage," and "The Iron Curtain." The uniformity of respondents in identifying these two suggests metaphors two possibilities: either all the students were in the same class when an instructor discussed them—which is logistically possible but unlikely; or multiple ELLC instructors used these metaphors in the instruction of advanced students to supplement the official curriculum material—which is more likely. All of the student respondents indicated that incorporating metaphors into class discussions is beneficial to their learning. Even so, the level of detail provided to justify these assertions was limited, perhaps because even advanced ESL students lack the vocabulary to adequately describe the effects metaphor has in language learning.

Two administrators and two instructors took the administrator/instructor questionnaire. The administrators' job titles are: Director of Academics, and Director of the ELLC. Both instructor respondents teach full time at the ELLC, and both regularly work with advanced-level students. All four respondents in this category acknowledged that metaphor is not currently a part of the ELLC advanced-level curriculum. However, both instructors indicated that they actively incorporate metaphor into their lessons—

in the same lesson that they introduce and discuss idioms. Notably, administrators and instructors recognized that doing so improves student learning. Despite this shared acknowledgment, administrators did not elaborate on how or why they thought metaphor is effective in ESL pedagogy, while instructors provided some justification for such views. One instructor said his mention of the metaphor "husband/wife as ball and chain" as a joke during class discussion elicited lively student interaction. At first, they were confused, but intrigued by the figurative language. After the instructor explained the meaning, however, students began discussing similar metaphors in their own culture—as is evident in the data below. A larger class discussion about metaphor ensued during which, the instructor observed, students were more engaged and interested than usual.

The L1 metaphors students listed provide in-roads for a discussion on how actively incorporating metaphor more often in ESL classrooms improves student learning. Among other metaphors presented, some of the L1 metaphors that ELLC students listed included these few: being thrown into a "golden cage" (marriage); between "a rock and a hard place"; and "getting the monkey off one's back." Using such metaphors presents opportunities for instructors to explore cultural and linguistic commonalities, as well as differences. Also, the limited and uniform number of English metaphors ESL students remember and understand suggests that only active integration and discussion of metaphor in the classroom helps students to learn about that kind of figurative language. The questionnaire data confirms as much. Students indicated that the reason they knew and understood "all the world's a stage" and "The Iron Curtain" is because they learned them in class. The complete list of L1 metaphors that ELLC students listed in the questionnaire is as follows:

> Marriage is going into a "golden cage"
> One is a "wolf" is they are reliable
> Self-righteous people have a "feather in their hat"
> They fought until "blood reached their knees"
> "Broken to pieces" is being tired
> Having "a bird on one's head" means they have unresolved problems
> "Feeding crows" will take out (blind) your eyes
> Between "a rock and a hard place"
> "Musician paid before the show" similar to our "don't put the cart before the horse"

As is evident in the, admittedly cursory, data, L1 metaphors are sometimes similar to English ones, and sometimes different. How metaphor varies across cultures, and how those differences can aid in ESL pedagogy, is further explored below.

Discussions and Limitations

In order to understand figurative language, "the learner needs to unravel the covert connections in the utterance through a process of inference . . . we can help [ESL students] if we explicitly encourage them to work through" (Lazar 1996: 46) the complex relationships between English and their native metaphors. Working through metaphors does two things that, ultimately, encourage critical thinking and language learning: first, it forces students to configure linguistic and cultural variables in order to comprehend foreign metaphors; and second, the linguistic and cultural similarities and differences exemplified in cross-cultural metaphor analysis presents in-roads for fostering intercultural empathy and understanding. While students "may learn to use some frequent metaphors without reflection, they are likely to achieve more if they are encouraged to consciously reflect on the metaphorical nature of language" (Deignan et al., p. 353). In other words, regardless of how often ESL teachers might stumble onto metaphor usage in their classrooms, ESL students are best served when teachers introduce metaphors as an intentional part of instruction.

Emphasizing the importance of raising cross-linguistic awareness, Deignan et al. (1997, p. 353) write: "while metaphor is almost certainly a feature of all natural languages, and some conceptual metaphors are common across several cultures and languages, not all linguistic or conceptual metaphors will be shared by any two languages." This is evident in the limited data set above. Some of the metaphors provided by the ELLC students exemplify common conceptual metaphors. Several of the Saudi Arabian student respondents, for instance, cited "between a blade and a wall" as a common metaphor used in their culture. In that case, the conceptual metaphor is the same as is the English metaphor "between a rock and a hard place." The same can be said for "marriage in a golden cage" (ball and chain). In these instances, when similar conceptual metaphors are explored, students benefit in two ways: one, they are presented with a new piece of cultural information suggesting commonality among diversity—i.e. cross-cultural empathy is fostered; and two, that new connection works to anchor both

the new metaphor and the language it *houses* in students' minds. Other L2 metaphors are both conceptually and linguistically similar to students' L1 metaphors—"getting burned," "musician paid before the show," and "bird on one's head" from the ELLC student respondents—are each conceptually and linguistically similar to students' L1 metaphors. In other words, "getting burned," "musician paid before the show," and "bird on one's head," all ELLC student respondent examples, are conceptually and linguistically similar to English metaphors.

Occasionally, some respondents cited L1 metaphors that initial linguistic presentation would seem to show some common conceptual foundation. However, more careful attention to the underlying meanings of such metaphors proved that these metaphors were quite different, despite surface similarities. Being a "wolf" in Saudi Arabian terms is to be reliable or trustworthy; in English, one would be considered cunning and, perhaps, even devious. There is also pedagogical value in such cases. Class discussions about why wolves are reliable in Saudi Arabia but are devious in the US open spaces for cultural comparisons. Also, sometimes ESL educators might elicit novel L1 metaphors from students. Similar benefits might come from that approach, as well. Some might consider metaphorical differences and similarities such as those described above to hinder or convolute ESL pedagogy. However, actively drawing upon metaphor "may fit in the broader pedagogical movement . . . where language learners are encouraged not only to perform in a language, but also *to reflect upon its use and characteristics*" (Boers, 2000, p. 554; italics mine). In reflecting upon metaphor's use and characteristics, as Boers suggests we do with language more generally, we encourage an intercultural dialogue that fosters cross-cultural empathy, facilitates learning, and perhaps might even generate new knowledge.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

Lazar (1996, p. 46) notes that "our task as teachers is to sensitize [ESL] students to the cultural significance which accrues to particular examples of figurative language in English, while encouraging them to compare these associations with those in their own language." Though most research into metaphor's use in ESL education has narrowly focused on its power to increase vocabulary retention, cross-cultural metaphor analysis

provides valuable avenues for discussion and, ultimately, can foster intercultural empathy and improve L2 learning.

Communicative competence includes being able to converse interculturally about foreign subjects and to address different worldviews and ideologies. Indeed, Littlemore and Low (2006) contend that this faculty can be improved using metaphor because, "in order to understand metaphor, it is necessary to appreciate the extended meanings and evaluations given by a specific culture to particular events, places, institutions, or people" (p. 269). Metaphor, then, is capable of educating ESL students in ways that build bridges, metaphorical pun intended.

The cognitive requirement for L2 learners in interpreting metaphor lends to effective engagement with course material, as well. They need to be able to acquire two seemingly opposed skills; they need "rapid access to a standard sense in order to maintain fluency in reading/listening, but at the same time they need to be able to recover, or hypothesize, metaphoric detail in order to interpret accurately and appropriately" (Littlemore & Low, 2006, p. 8). Lazar's (1996) interpretive states provide space for ESL learners to cultivate both of these abilities.

This kind of research, while potentially useful and pragmatic in terms of ways to teach English as L2, does not take into account ideologies inherent in culture-specific metaphors. Littlemore and Low (2006) suggest that future research "looks particularly at the more neglected discourse-related areas of illocutionary and strategic [communicative] competence; learning about words is not the same as learning to use them or deciding whether one is being manipulated" (p. 22). Their suggestion is to foster an ethic in this regard, a critical pedagogy that accounts for the ideological, political, and rhetorical power of metaphor. Future studies in this area might benefit from focusing on how underlying social and power structures are exemplified and reinforced via metaphor. Cognitive neuroscience might also contribute to this line of inquiry in interdisciplinary efforts; research suggests that lexical connections children make when learning their native language is similar to the way adults comprehend metaphor (Littlemore, 2001). Wouldn't it be interesting to compare fMRI scans of children learning to speak with ESL learners introduced to novel metaphors for the first time?

And finally, the metaphor-approach might be beneficially co-opted by the professional and business community. Internationalization of trade and ICT ubiquity has, in recent decades, created an environment where professionals often interact with peers abroad who are culturally and linguistically different. While this study does not suggest how metaphor might be incorporated in the international professional realm with a heuristic or method, it does imply the need for future research to explore such options. Traditional ESL methods are already making inroads into the professional and business worlds by way of private and freelance tutors and schools. I see no reason why metaphor's efficacy as an L2 learning tool wouldn't benefit professionals in their interactions as they navigate cultural and linguistic barriers in their careers. Business relations in China, for instance, require small talk and the cultivation of personal relationships first, before business can proceed. What better way for an American learning Mandarin and conversing with a Chinese colleague to connect than discuss common and disparate figurative speech. One of the most interesting conversations I've had with my Thai father-in-law was ignited by his explanation to me of Thais' use of "frog in a coconut." After some deliberation and example-giving, I figured out that metaphor is roughly equivalent to "head in the sand." The conversation benefited from the colloquial nature of that exchange, and soon we were discussing international politics, newly equipped with the other's term with which to charge the guilty parties. Professionals in more serious situations, too, might benefit from active linguistic and cultural engagement. ■

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Literature reviews

TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERCULTURAL VISUAL COMMUNICATION

A critical review and call for research

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The treatment of the visual as a universal language, though less widely accepted than in the past, is still common. Two critical assumptions underlie this approach. First, that the ability to read images, sometimes known as visual literacy, is universal; and second, that the images, icons, colors, and other elements that comprise visual communication transcend cultural differences. Both of these assumptions are problematic, but in this article, I focus on the latter.

Consider, for instance, international signage or instructions meant to transcend cultural boundaries. Though intended to be more inclusive, such visual communication is often neither culturally transparent, nor easy to decipher. IKEA instructions are a perfect example, serving as a source of hilarity for many, but also a source of frustration for anyone who needs to decipher the instructions to accomplish a task. Similarly, some companies have claimed to develop universal communication campaigns, arguing that designing for specific cultural groups promotes discrimination and separatism. However, a look at public communication in a global market quickly makes apparent the cultural connotations carried by more complex visual images.

In short, a one size fits all model is no more appropriate for visual communication than it is for verbal communication. Practitioners' lore generally supports this
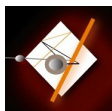
assertion, albeit prescriptively. Research in a variety of disciplines has connected intercultural models developed by Hofstede and others more explicitly to professional communication practices; however, relatively little of this work has examined visual communication specifically, and many scholars find the models to be outdated and overly simple. On what, then, should we base decisions about crafting visual language in order to communicate most effectively with intercultural and international audiences? As importantly, what should guide decision-making about when to localize visual language and when to globalize it?

In order to make informed and effective design decisions for various audiences and contexts, we need a framework for understanding cultural aspects of visual communication, one that, as Kostelnick (1995) argued, "accounts for the overt as well as the hidden aspects, the rational and the irrational, the aesthetic and the pragmatic" (p. 182). To build that framework, we need a foundation that integrates both theory and empiricism. Through a critical review of the existing practitioner lore, theoretical categorizations, and empirical research on intercultural visual communication, this article synthesizes what we know, and examines what we still need to learn in order to develop a framework for effectively practicing visual communication in a global environment. I begin with an overview of philosophical perspectives regarding the universality—or lack thereof—of visual communication.

A Philosophical Continuum

Almost two decades ago, Charles Kostelnick (1995) described the use of visual language in intercultural communication as a continuum that ranged from a global approach to a culture-focused approach (see also Bosley 1999), or, in more theoretical terminology, a modern approach to a postmodern approach. The modern approach assumes that "images can be simplified and homogenized" to transcend cultural differences (Kostelnick, 1995, p. 184). A widely recognized example is the International System Of Typographic Picture Education (Isotype) developed by Otto and Marie Neurath beginning in the 1930s; Isotype was intended to serve as a means of global communication, particularly communication of statistical data (Sandner, 2008). The use of highly simplified, abstract, and generic human forms that carry no suggestion of race or gender is typical of the modern approach (Arnold, 1998; Horton, 1993; Horton, 2005). As Kostelnick (2011)

notes, this approach became popular following World War II, but still has many followers. It downplays cultural difference, and it also is attractive for purely practical reasons: if visual language can be crafted to be culturally-neutral, then it can be utilized in place of verbal language to reduce translation costs and document sizes (Horton, 1993). According to Horn (MacroVu, Inc.), "Visual language facilitates intercultural communication by tightly integrating the instantly comprehensible images with words. Visual language makes translations easier and less expensive because there are often 30 percent fewer words to translate in visual language documents."

However, the global or modern approach is limited in its applicability. First, meaning may be lost or distorted through simplification attempts (Kostelnick, 1995), so rather than serving a broad range of readers, the design may serve none of its readers. Second, the global approach tends to be most successful within discourse communities that have their own specialized visual communication practices and conventions; essentially, such communities function as cultures within themselves (Bosley, 1999), suggesting that the visual communication isn't global after all, but, rather, is culturally-focused, as the postmodern perspective demands.

The postmodern perspective is based on the premise that "…visual language is largely a social construct that is learned through experience, that varies across cultural groups, and that therefore requires sensitivity to context" (Kostelnick, 1995, p. 183). In short, readers have culturally-derived expectations for visual communication; their meaning-making practices do not function in isolation (Aiello & Thurlow, 2006), but, rather, depend on cultural context. That is, we use our cultural preferences, practices, attitudes, etc. to read—and create—visual communication (Del Galdo, 1996; Bloomer, 1997). Additionally, how well we read a particular piece of visual communication depends, not only on these broader cultural constructs, but also on the specific demands of the task at hand, and the unique characteristics of the individual performing that task. The postmodern approach therefore insists that "…visual language must match the cultural and social context in which it is deployed" (Kostelnick, 2011, p. 43), and foregrounds the complexity of those contexts.

Like the global/modern approach, the postmodern has both advantages and limitations. It essentially calls for visual language to be designed, or redesigned, for each culture in which it will be used. Theoretically, this should lead to documents

that are more appealing and more helpful for their intended users. At the same time, however, it simply is not feasible to translate visual communication for each cultural context. Particularly given the array of design choices and the subtle nuances of each, translating visual language effectively may prove even more complex than translating verbal language.

Somewhere in between the two extremes of the continuum is a balancing point. In some situations, treating visual language as universal may be sufficient. In others, a high degree of cultural specificity may be required. Most often, some combination of globalization and localization is likely to be necessary (Horton, 2005). Additionally, as Kostelnick (2011) eloquently reminds us, communication actually takes places "one reader at a time, so the broad brush strokes of culture must be sharpened with a more local and in-depth understanding of cultural context" (p. 33). Currently, however, the practice of intercultural visual communication tends to rely more heavily on prescriptions than it does on theory and research.

Prescriptions

Much of the practice of visual communication for intercultural and international contexts relies on lists of dos and don'ts that invariably come with a disclaimer that they "are just guidelines"; they generally grow, not from close study, but from the shifting sands of past customs and practices. Prescriptions abound for color use in particular, possibly because color tends to be so strongly imbued with cultural connotations. For instance, it is not uncommon to see a list of colors accompanied by the "meanings" of those colors within certain countries or cultures (see, for example, Aykin & Milewski, 2005). So, the color red—or a particular shade of red—might be attributed with good luck, prosperity, and happiness in China, but with danger or anger in the United States. Similar statements are plentiful for images, particularly those involving animals: in India, the owl is considered bad luck; in Brazil, a deer represents homosexuality; in Japan, the turtle is a symbol of long life (Fernandes, 1995). McCool (2008) refers to this as the "taboo approach to culture"—an approach that essentially says to avoid certain colors for certain cultures because they "deliver risky or even offensive messages" (p. 1).

Such prescriptions present many of the same problems as those for colors: although they draw on cultural and national traditions—on "ritual, legend, and custom" (Bloomer, 1997, p. 43)—they tend to be oversimplifications that rarely account for subtle variations having a dramatic impact on meaning. One shade of red may carry a certain connotation, while another shade may be viewed quite differently. The connotations may shift with the occasion, be it social or professional, personal or public, and they shift as well over time. And, culturally specific associations may be layered over meanings that are shared across cultures (see, for example, Madden, Hewett, and Roth, 2000).

Even more importantly, though, prescriptive advice does not offer a foundation for sound and consistent decision making in visual communication. Even if we could be certain that the prescriptions are accurate—which they may or may not be in a given context—and even if we could assume that cultural associations are static—which they aren't—using prescriptions as a basis for design decisions is neither sustainable, nor feasible, given the complexity of issues that shape responses to communication. A more productive approach is to "teach people how to think about the problem rather than presenting a list of items to check off" (Fernandes, 1995, p. x).

Theoretical Categorizations

One way to think about visual communication problems is through the lens of cultural dimensions—particularly the values systems identified by Hofstede—power distance, individuality/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long- and short-term orientation—and Hall—high/low context. Several scholars have theorized about the ways in which these cultural dimensions may manifest themselves in visual communication, based on the understanding that "Ideology underpins the discourse system of [a] culture" and, in turn, that the "form and style of discourse arise from ideology" (Tebeaux & Driskill, 1999, p. 239).

Marcus & Gould (2000), for instance, proposed a number of ways in which Hofstede's dimensions might shape the design of websites. For example, user interfaces from cultures that score high on the dimension of power distance might be highly structured, with use of images that reflect expertise, authority, and social hierarchy, while those that score low on power distance would demonstrate a stronger sense of

Figure 1

Mexican government page
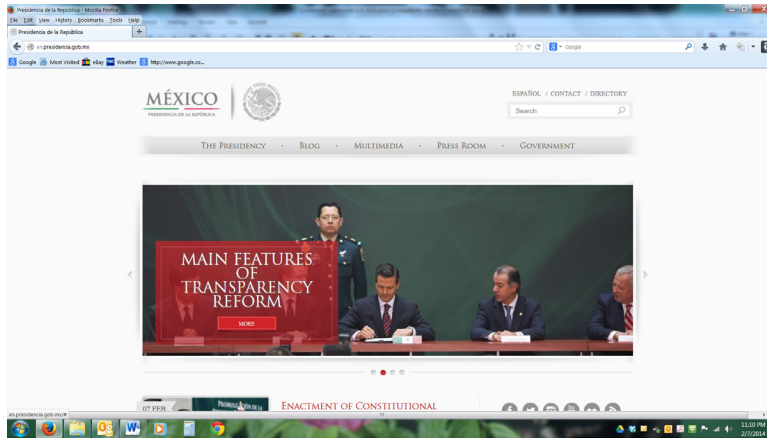
Figure 2

US government page
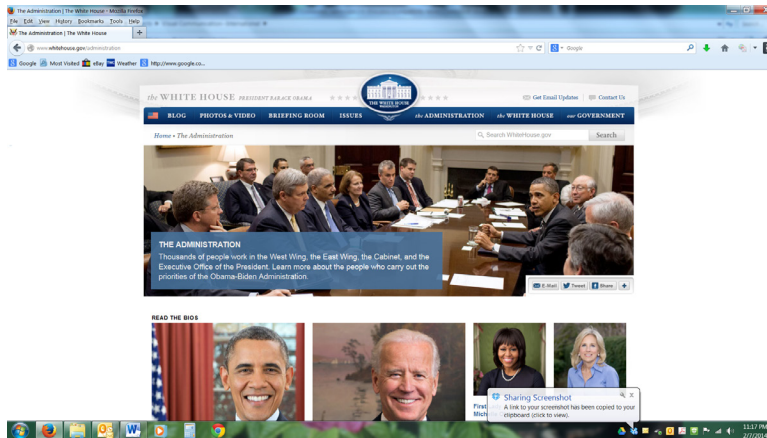
equality (see Figures 1 and 2, for example: the web page from Mexico—a high power distance culture—appears very formal and authoritarian, while that from the US—a low power distance culture—gives a much more casual and egalitarian impression).

Similarly, the interfaces of cultures ranked high on individualism might foreground individual achievement, youth, and activity, while those ranked low on individualism would, instead, emphasize group achievement, wisdom, and "states of

being." A high ranking on the dimension of masculinity might mean visual language that emphasizes traditional gender roles, with graphics that are utilized predominantly for practical goals, while a low masculinity ranking might instead mean blurred gender roles and greater attention given to aesthetics. (For example, see Figures 3 and 4: although both pages are similarly laid out, the Japanese, high masculinity, tourism page relies much more heavily on the textual messages; the organization of the page seems intended primarily to support the text; on the Swedish page, the situation seems

Figure 3

Japanese tourism page
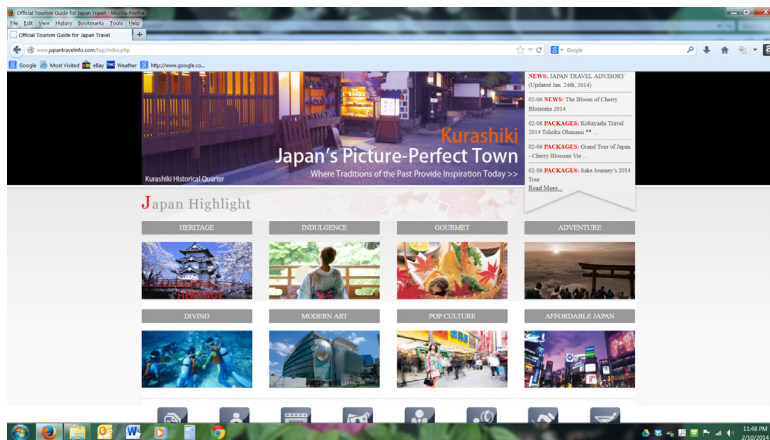
Figure 4

Swedish tourism page
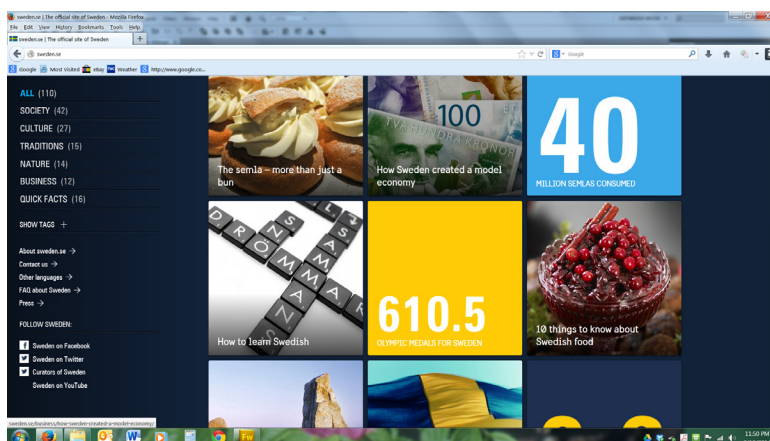
reversed, with the aesthetic impact of the images carrying the weight, and the text almost an afterthought).

High uncertainty avoidance may manifest itself through clear navigation schemes and use of multiple organizational cues, while low uncertainty avoidance may entail a looser interface structure, with more user choices. Finally, a long-term orientation might reveal itself through a focus on relationships and patience, while a short-term orientation might instead be revealed through a focus on rules and results. Marcus and Gould's suggestions are comparable to those of other scholars seeking to map Hofstede's cultural dimensions onto visual communication (see, for example, Callahan, 2005; Tebeaux & Driskill, 1999).

Similarly, scholars have theorized about how other cultural values may shape visual communication, most notably the concept of high- and low-context identified by Hall. For example, Bosley (1999) suggested that high-context cultures, which tend to rely more heavily on implied or implicit communication, would utilize more abstract visuals that speak for themselves and incorporate less text. In contrast, low-context cultures would expect more concrete and detailed visuals that incorporate textual explanations.

Many have questioned whether cultural value categorizations offer a sound basis for analysis in a communicative landscape that is far different from that of Hofstede's and Hall's original research. They argue, rightly so, that it is increasingly problematic to treat geographical boundaries as cultural boundaries. As Roberts (2003) argued, ". . . Given the existence of transnational identities (not to mention multinational corporations), the notion of viewing the world as being organized by national boundaries alone becomes dangerously simplistic" (p. 4). Additionally, culture is fluid rather than static, and categorizations like those presented by Hofstede and Hall promote fixed stereotypes that work against intercultural communication. However, as Wurtz (2006) noted, "In spite of these important criticisms, communication patterns today still resonate with the cultural dimensions proposed decades ago" (p. 276). Still, these categorizations by themselves cannot provide us with a sufficient framework for understanding intercultural visual communication. As importantly, "The ability to label prospective audiences by categories may help us anticipate the probable predispositions of cultural groups, but it still leaves us tantalizingly distant from the actual processes of specific individuals" (Driskill, 1997,

pp. 254-255). However, utilizing cultural dimensions and values to identify potential patterns serves as a theoretical starting point that can then be expanded through research.

Research

A comprehensive framework of intercultural visual communication requires both a broad-strokes understanding of cultural patterns that may shape design, and a research-based detail-oriented investigation of cultural artifacts—for the purposes of this discussion, documents of various types—and user interactions with those artifacts. The research on intercultural visual communication tends to take the form of either analyses of documents, typically websites; or studies examining user behaviors, including color associations, scene perception and comprehension, and user preferences and usability. Below, I provide highlights of this research. The goal here is not to provide a comprehensive and all-inclusive review of the literature, but, rather, to identify patterns that emerge across the different types of research, patterns that might identify directions for future inquiry and, in turn, contribute to a larger conceptual framework.

Document Analyses

Document analyses are arguably the most prevalent form of research in intercultural visual communication. Such analyses usually take as their starting point the cultural dimensions discussed above and attempt to determine whether or not the documents adhere to these categorizations. In general, these studies suggest that the cultural values categorizations do reveal themselves in visual communication, although not always as strongly or clearly as the theories suggest.

For example, continuing in the same vein from his earlier work with Gould, Marcus (2005) used Hofstede's dimensions to analyze the characteristics of websites from various cultures with different values. (It should be noted, however, that Marcus based his findings on personal experience rather than on what he termed "detailed study" (p. 59)). Marcus indicated that sites from more individualist cultures tended to have images of products and individuals, while those from collectivist cultures had images of groups. However, for most of the cultural dimensions, Marcus noted that

there was overlap in the website characteristics; that is, visual design characteristics did not necessarily vary neatly with differences in Hofstede's rankings.

More systematic and rigorous studies have also revealed some differences in visual design across websites from different cultures. Singh and Baack (2004), for example, found that design characteristics of U.S. and Mexican corporate websites varied in ways that corresponded with Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Their study involved an extensive content analysis of U.S. and Mexican corporate websites. For the US, they looked at the sites of top global fortune 500 companies that sold products/ services in the US and Mexico; for Mexican sites, they used a sample of top local Mexican company sites. In all, they analyzed 95 websites, each with approximately 20–25 pages of content. Singh and Baack reported statistically significant differences in aspects that reflected collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity. For instance, the Mexican sites reflected clear gender roles in which men were depicted conducting business and women, when included, were depicted in more traditional roles.

Callahan (2005) also examined websites using Hofstede's dimensions as a framework for analysis. In her comparative analysis of university websites from eight countries, she found, like Singh and Baack, patterns that for the most part aligned with the cultural dimensions. However, Callahan also reported that the correlations were weaker than expected.

Würtz (2006) conducted a similar comparative analysis, but used Hall's high-and low-context as the theoretical framework; she also used versions of one company's— McDonald's—website that had been designed for different cultures, rather than using sites from different entities. Würtz hypothesized that the sites from high-context cultures would incorporate more visual communication and less text than sites from low-context cultures; likewise, she predicted, too, that the types of imagery would differ, in keeping with the differing values systems. Finally, she expected that high-context cultures would give priority to aesthetics, while low-context cultures would give more attention to a highly structured organization that would foster efficient usage. Würtz found that the websites from high-context cultures utilize more—and more elaborate— animation, as well as more images in general. And the images reflected collectivism,

such as family activities, while the images on sites from low-context cultures reflected individualism, such as free time (p. 26).

Finally, a handful of document analysis studies have looked at more traditional user documents, rather than websites, but with similar findings that, again, appear to correlate with the cultural value categorizations. Qiuye (2000) examined the graphics used in Chinese and US popular science magazines and instruction manuals for household products. She found that the Chinese visuals tended to provide more contextual information, while US visuals tended to be more direct. Additionally, the U.S. manuals provided larger and more detailed illustrations to aid task performance, with one-to-one correspondence between a visual and a textual explanation. Qiuye concluded that the differences she observed corresponded to general cultural differences in communication style.

Similarly, Wang and Wang (2009) examined technical documents intended for Chinese and German mechanics; they looked at the arrangement, integration, and explicitness of text and graphics in order to identify cross-cultural differences in the text-graphic relationship. They, too, found that the Chinese documents had more graphics and less redundancy between graphics and text.

Taken as a body of work, these studies would seem to provide solid support for the theoretical propositions put forth by Marcus and Gould (2000), Bosley (1999), Tebeaux and Driskill (1999) and others. That is, the criticisms of Hofstede's and Hall's work notwithstanding, the patterns revealed by the body of document analysis studies appear to align with their cultural values/dimensions. It is particularly telling that the patterns appear to hold across different types of documents. Yet, there are some critical points that merit further discussion. First, the analyses begin with the unstated assumption that the design of the documents is shaped primarily by culture. However, in every case, the documents for comparison were chosen by geographical borders, rather than cultural borders. One might argue, for example, that university websites are a product of a distinct subculture—academia—that crosses national borders. This could account for the weaker patterns Callahan (2005) observed.

Even more important is the fact that many other factors beyond culture are likely to shape the visual communication of professional documents (Callahan, 2005). Were the designers influenced by broader genre conventions? By the designs of other

documents? Did they have to adhere to organizational standards and guidelines, and who developed those, with what influences? Were the designs constrained by issues of technology or accessibility? For that matter, there could be a chicken and egg pattern at work: if the designers had even a limited knowledge of intercultural communication—which seems a safe assumption, given their positions—they would certainly be aware of Hofstede's and Hall's work. Would it not then be likely that they would utilize this in their designs? That is, do the designs reflect cultural patterns in visual communication? Or do they reflect what the designers have been told are cultural patterns in visual communication? Because there is virtually no way to control for these factors in a document analysis, we cannot conclude with any certainty that an observed difference between documents is due to the independent variable of cultural values (Hoeken & Korzilius, 2003).

Finally, the analyses cannot tell us whether the design differences influence usability for various audiences, whether individuals from a particular culture exhibit a preference for documents designed specifically for their culture, or whether either of these factors might change over time and with ongoing changes in access to communication technologies. Ultimately, these are all questions that can be answered only through research that examines user behaviors and preferences (Callahan, 2005; Würtz, 2006).

User Behavior—Color Associations

As mentioned, color is an aspect of visual communication that is considered to be particularly laden with cultural associations. And yet, there is some research that suggests color associations may be less culturally-specific than indicated by practitioner lore. Madden, Hewett & Roth (2000), for example, looked at consumer color preferences and associations in eight countries. The authors used semantic differential scales to identify meanings associated with 10 different colors. The study participants then rated each of the colors in terms of how much they liked them. The authors found that blue, green, and white were strongly associated with "peaceful," "gentle," and "calming" in all eight countries. However, for some countries, these colors also had additional meanings that did not transcend national boundaries. Black and brown similarly had shared associations across countries, but also had additional unique associations. Most of the

colors had some degree of shared meaning in addition to country-specific connotations. The authors concluded that ". . . the meanings associated with some colors may be pancultural, regional, or unique to a given culture" (p. 102).

Amare and Manning (2013) have also demonstrated that color associations may be less culturally-specific than previously thought. They argue that "the primary contribution of color . . . in text design is emotional . . . and that the core emotional meanings of colors are much more universal and consistent" (p. 73). The results of their survey of 120 undergraduate students revealed no apparent differences between US-born and non-US-born participants in their emotion spectrum responses to colors.

Methodological aspects of each of these studies may muddy the findings. For example, the semantic differential and 7-point scale utilized by Madden, Hewett & Roth (2000) may themselves be culturally-biased, which would affect the study results. Likewise, Amare and Manning (2013) focused on the core emotional meanings of colors, but their study did not disprove the idea that there may be conceptual meanings overlaying the emotional meanings, particularly since their study participants cannot be considered a random sample of individuals from distinct cultures. In short, both studies certainly complicate the notion that color connotations are culturally-specific; but they do not necessarily dispel that view.

User Behavior—Viewing Patterns and Focal Points

Two other areas predicted to vary across cultures are viewing patterns and attention to focal points. One would certainly expect differences due to reading patterns—left-to-right, right-to-left, and top-to-bottom—but the research suggests there is more at work. Returning once again to cultural dimensions, scholars have utilized a variety of methodologies to demonstrate that what individuals attend to when looking at visual material appears to be linked to their reliance on context, as well as the value they accord relationships.

Callow & Schiffman (2002), for example, investigated the ways in which "contextual communication style" (p. 261) influenced individual's ability to interpret the visual appeals in printed advertisements. The researchers presented Filipina and U.S. female undergraduate students with fictitious perfume ads, and asked them to rate the extent to which each ad communicated different ideas, including a desire for personal

challenge, for independence, for leadership, for meeting one's own expectations, and for power—again, the terms themselves are culturally-dependent, which may alter the participants' responses. In keeping with the idea that individuals from high-context cultures rely on implicit meaning, the Filipina participants read more into the ads, and this held true for even the more explicit ads. However, as the researchers noted, product type may influence the viewer's "tendency to derive implicit meaning from visual ads" (p. 273).

A second approach to examining viewing patterns assesses the degree to which participants are aware of changes in visual stimuli. Masuda and Nisbett (2001) showed participants animated vignettes of underwater scenes and asked them to report on the contents. Participants were given a recognition text in which they were shown objects, either in the original setting or in a novel setting, and were asked to judge whether they had seen the objects. The researchers replicated this task using photographs of wildlife. In each experiment, responses of the East Asian participants—Japanese students at Kyoto University, in Japan—differed from those of the Western participants—American students at the University of Michigan. Japanese participants made more comments than did American participants about contextual information and relationships. Additionally, Japanese participants more accurately identified previously seen objects that were presented in their original background than those in a novel background, a change that did not affect American participants (p. 932-933). In a subsequent study, Masuda and Nisbett (2006) tested similar hypotheses with the same types of participants. Their data again supported the idea that East Asians attended more to context and relationships than did Westerners, who attended more to focal objects.

Boduroglu, Shah, and Nisbett (2009) likewise looked at East Asian and Western participants' awareness of contextual information. However, because responses to scenes and photographs may reflect cultural biases regarding what is important in a scene (p. 350), their study relied on stimuli with simple geometric shapes. Participants—East Asian and American students at the University of Michigan—were asked to look at and "encode" a visual display of colored squares and then view a second display and determine whether any of the colors had changed. Boduroglu, Shah, and Nisbett found, once again, that East Asian participants were more attuned to relationships and context than were Western participants.

Eye-tracking provides another useful methodology for examining viewing patterns. Eye-tracking studies can record both the patterns of eye movements as someone looks at a page or screen and the location and duration of eye fixations—points at which the viewer's eye pauses—on that page or screen (see Figures 5 and 6).

Chua, Bolan, and Nisbett (2005), for example, studied the eye movement patterns of Chinese and American graduate students at the University of Michigan.

Figure 5

Eye movements (lines) and fixations (circles)
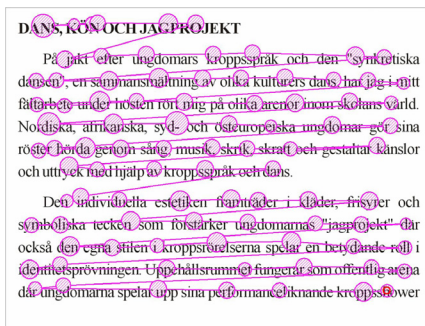
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_Fixations_Saccades.jpg

Figure 6

Heat Map of Eye Fixations from eye-tracking study

Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/smieyetracking/5470335055/
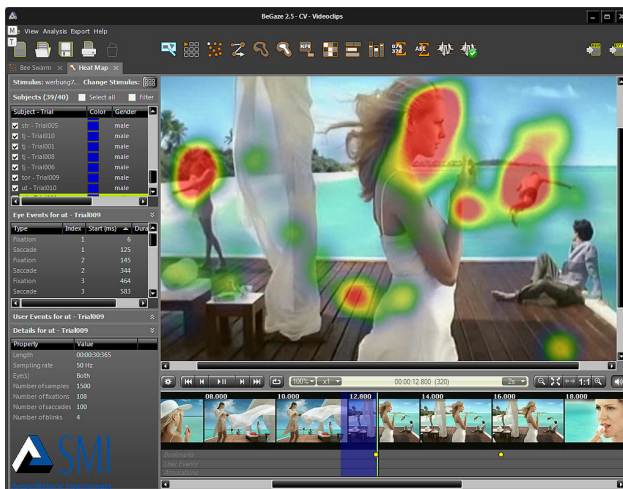
Participants looked at photographs that had a focal object on a complex background. The researchers found that the American participants fixated on the focal objects more quickly, and looked at them for longer periods than did the Chinese. The Chinese participants, in contrast, made more saccades—eye movements—to the background of the photograph.

Similarly, Dong and Lee (2008) conducted an eye-tracking study that examined Chinese, Korean, and American participants' interactions with websites. The researchers reached similar conclusions: the East Asian participants focused on the web page as a whole, as well as relationships within the page. Western participants, in contrast, focused on specific objects, and were more sequential in their viewing patterns.

In short, studies examining viewing patterns and focal points, regardless of methodology, point to the conclusion that individuals from high-context cultures are more attuned to implicit information and relationships in visual communication than are individuals from lower-context cultures. It is interesting, as well, that these patterns persisted even in the face of methodological concerns. Most notably, with the exception of Callow & Schiffman (2002), the studies have typically involved small groups of participants, and the participants tend to be college students, which suggests a certain level of homogeneity in age, of course, but also, perhaps, in exposure to visual communication, and even in approaches to communication. These characteristics could result in smaller observed differences, meaning that the cross-cultural patterns could actually be stronger than reported.

User Behavior—Preferences

While research on viewing patterns investigates physical and cognitive behaviors that are largely habitual and automatic, research on user preferences investigates whether more conscious or deliberate interactions with visual material are shaped by those viewing patterns. Here, the research findings are much less clear cut.

For example, Maitra and Goswami (1995) studied the responses of American viewers to documents designed for Japanese readers. The study began with the premise that the design of Japanese documents emphasizes aesthetics and ambiguity, rather than clarity, explicitness, and simplicity (p. 198). Study participants had skills in desktop publishing, professional communication, graphic design, and engineering, but

little knowledge of Japanese culture or design (p. 199). They were asked to comment upon the effectiveness of the visual elements—including photographs, line drawings, and charts—design features, and text-visual integration of an annual report that was translated into English. Not surprisingly, participants applied Western standards for design, in their evaluation. The researchers concluded that U.S. readers "expected similar graphic design principles in the Japanese document" (p. 202), and applied different standards of evaluation than would Japanese readers. However, the study involved only eight participants and did not collect data from Japanese designers or readers.

Fukuoka, Kojima, and Spyridakis (1999) similarly looked at visual communication preferences among Japanese and American readers, specifically, preferences regarding the inclusion of illustrations in instructional documents. Results were based on participants' first impressions of the layouts, as well as responses to a questionnaire regarding ease of use. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between the groups—American and Japanese individuals (primarily students) in the Seattle, Washington, area—regarding their perceptions of cartoon graphics; the majority of participants were indifferent to the use of cartoons in instructional manuals. Additionally, all of the participants preferred a layout that incorporated illustrations, and both groups indicated that they thought having more illustrations would make the instructions easier to use. This could mean that the particular task was better explained through visuals, regardless of culture; it could mean that there is a general preference—irrespective of culture—for visuals in instructions; it could mean that the preferences of the Japanese participants reflected the time those participants had been living in the US. Ultimately, the small sample size—a total of 29 participants—and artificial task again limit the extent to which valid and reliable conclusions can be drawn.

Finally, Ichimura (2001) used survey methodology to assess the best approaches to localize the design of customer documents for Asian/Pacific audiences—specifically those from Japan, Australia, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. The design characteristics examined were color, typography, layout, text-visual integration, and inclusion of pictographs. Although there were some shared preferences across participant groups, the data did not reveal strong patterns.

Although it seems reasonable to expect that cultural differences in viewing patterns would lead to differences in preferences as well, the research does not provide

clear evidence for that. Does this mean that cultural preferences regarding visual communication simply aren't very strong? Possibly, but other explanations seem more likely. First and foremost, each of the studies summarized here has significant methodological shortcomings, ranging from sample size and selection to experimental task. Additionally, interpreting user preferences may not be straightforward because preferences are inherently subjective, may shift with changes in context, and are, at times, difficult to articulate.

User Behavior—Performance

Studies that examine user performance move from identifying differences and preferences in viewing behaviors to questioning what these differences and preferences might mean in practical terms. That is, how might they affect users' understanding or ability to complete a task? These are the questions that reflect actual user experience, the final piece of the intercultural visual communication puzzle.

One approach to looking at user performance involves measuring how quickly individuals can perform an assigned task. Faiola and Matei (2005) used this approach to test the hypothesis that task performance should be faster when users are working with documents created by designers from their own culture (p. 381). The materials used were two websites, one designed by an American designer and translated into Chinese, the other designed by a Chinese designer and translated into English. American and Chinese students from a variety of U.S. universities agreed to join the study as participants. To help maintain the validity of the study, each student participant viewed one website. Moreover, details of a web-designer's country of origin were kept from each participant. As such, a student could not know which of the designers developed the website used in a particular test. Participants navigated sites developed in their first language: American participants in English and Chinese participants in Chinese. Participants were asked a series of six factual questions for which they had to find the answers embedded on the website. For four of the six questions, performance time was better when the national cultures of participants and site designer matched. That is, Chinese students performed better with the Chinese-designed site, and American students performed better with the American-designed site. The researchers noted that the lack of significant results for the last two questions could be due to the fact that

far fewer participants completed those tasks, which required more in-depth navigation through the site. Overall, though, the data aligns nicely with the user preference data reported by Maitra and Goswami (1995).

Although the time involved in completing a task can be an important measure of performance, even more important is completing the task successfully. Here, too, culturally-linked viewing patterns and preferences, theoretically, should impact performance. For example, Wang and Wang (2009) found that Chinese mechanics were better able to comprehend the graphics in the document than were German mechanics, which is in keeping with other research studies that suggest Chinese participants should outperform the U.S. participants in reading visual material.

However, Olmstead (1999) reported a contradictory finding. She examined the usability of "language independent" signs from hospitals. The data she collected in the US and in China revealed that most participants, regardless of culture, actually had difficulty identifying the symbols on the signs. The elderly had more trouble than younger participants, and men had more difficulty than women. Interestingly, though, the differences between the U.S. and Chinese groups were small. Olmstead concluded that the age difference could be due to younger participants' greater exposure to visual communication, while the gender difference could be due to the fact that women, in their role as primary caregivers, more frequently visit hospitals (p. 319).

In short, the differences that emerged were most likely not due to deeply ingrained cultural differences, but rather to greater exposure/experience. This seems to counter both theory and other research studies that suggest the Chinese participants should be better than the U.S. participants at reading visual material. However, the abstract symbols used on language independent signs are typically depicted on a flat background without any visual context, which could conceivably make them more difficult to interpret for individuals from high-context cultures.

As yet, the intercultural visual communication research that looks at user performance is limited, at best, and, as the studies summarized here suggest, the findings are still far from conclusive.

Conclusions

As Kostelnick and Hassett (2003) noted, "Although scholars have theorized about how visual language develops in social and cultural contexts, these avenues of inquiry remain fragmented across many disciplines" (p. 4). This remains true a decade later. The studies discussed here draw on advertising, computer-mediated communication, design, marketing, psychology, and, of course, technical communication (see Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Studies Discussed

Type/Focus	Field	Studies
Document Analyses	Computer-Mediated Communication	Wurtz (2006)
		Callahan (2005)
		Singh & Baack (2004)
	Design	Marcus (2005)
	Technical Communication	Wang & Wang (2009)
		Qiuye (2000)
User Behavior—Color Associations	Marketing	Madden, Hewett & Roth (2000)
	Technical Communication	Amare & Manning (2013)
User Behavior—Performance	Computer-Mediated Communication	Faiola & Matei (2005)
	Design	Olmstead (1999)
	Technical Communication	Wang & Wang (2009)
User Behavior—Preferences	Technical Communication	Fukuoka, Kojima & Spyridakis (1999)
	Technical Communication	Ichimura (2001)
		Maitra & Goswami (1995)
User Behavior—Viewing Patterns & Focal Points	Advertising	Callow & Schiffman (2002)
	Design	Dong & Lee (2008)
	Psychology	Boduroglu, Shah & Nisbett (2009)
		Chua, Bolan & Nisbett (2005)
		Masuda & Nisbett (2001)

The goal of this article has been to begin weaving these strands into a cohesive whole that highlights patterns and can foster development of a framework of intercultural visual communication. What patterns have emerged?

- Whether for good or ill, the dimensions/values outlined by Hofstede and Hall permeate investigations of intercultural visual communication; the findings suggest that we should not rush to do away with Hofstede's and Hall's cultural values categories.

- The visual characteristics of documents from different cultures appear to reflect the values outlined by Hofstede and Hall, but more research is needed to better understand designers' decision-making processes that lead to those characteristics.

- Some color associations are likely to be culturally-linked, while others may transcend cultural boundaries. More research is needed.

- The viewing patterns of individuals reflect the extent of their reliance on contextual information and relationships.

- The connections between viewing patterns and design preferences remain unclear. Much more—and more rigorous—research is needed into user preferences and their impacts.

- User performance appears better when design is matched to viewing patterns, but, again, more research is needed.

The common theme here is that more research is needed. A number of the studies have methodological issues that detract substantially from their reliability. Additionally, much of the research is several years old; scholarly activity in intercultural visual communication seems to have waned, rather than grown, over the past several years, which is troubling given the prevalence of visual communication. Although on the surface it may appear that we know a fair amount about intercultural visual communication, a deeper look reveals that there is far more we do not know.

What do we still need to know? We could benefit from more comparative analyses—essentially studies of contrastive visual rhetoric that systematically examine the use of various visual features, much like contrastive rhetoric examines the use of linguistic features. Such studies might delve more deeply into cultural patterns in use of

- color (choices, quantity, application)
- static and other images (type, position, quantity)
- typography
- space and balance
- visual organization and navigation.

Systematic document analyses utilizing large data sets to identify cultural design conventions in a particular genre—instructional documents, annual reports, etc.—could offer useful guidelines for practitioners from other cultures. If comparable studies are conducted with a number of genres, the results could conceivably enable us to generate a design framework that is genre independent. However, as useful as such studies would be, they would still be one-dimensional, in the sense that they focus on artifacts, rather than fluid behaviors; they look backward, not forward. As such, they can add to a framework of intercultural visual communication, but they cannot stand by themselves.

Ultimately, the most productive research will be user-centered rather than document-centered. It will involve individuals from different cultures in carefully designed studies that rely on different approaches and methodologies: usability, eye-tracking, interviews, surveys, and so on. It will be research that centers on individuals' interactions with visual language and relies, not only on observation, but also on participant input and feedback. Such research would enable us to address larger questions that document-based research cannot:

- Can basic perceptual principles of design—e.g. contrast, grouping, etc.—truly be considered universal?

- How significantly do cultural differences in visual communication affect document usability and effectiveness?

- If a cultural preference exists, how does it impact individual performance?

- How are cultures affected by imported design? That is, what cultural changes—in viewing patterns and preferences, for example—may occur over time in response to an influx of foreign design?

- Are new cultural patterns in visual communication emerging, for example, within *hybrid* cultures that develop as a result of globalization?

We currently have the bare bones of a framework of intercultural visual communication. The studies discussed in this article begin to layer flesh on those bones, but much more work is needed. Only through well-conceived and rigorous research that looks both at visual communication artifacts and at visual communication behaviors can we craft a comprehensive framework that will enable us to communicate effectively in a global environment. ■

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connexions interviews

connexions interview with

SCOTT ABEL

Transcript of the interview with Scott Abel, CEO and Chief Content Strategist at The Content Wrangler, in the United States of America. Scott is a content management strategist and social media choreographer. He is also an editor of technical, medical and scientific documents and books.

The interview was recorded for issue 2(1). It was conducted by Kyle Mattson, via Skype, on November 24, 2014. The interview was transcribed from the recorded interview by Quan Zhou, *connexions*' section editor.

The video recording of this interview is available on the *connexions* Vimeo channel at https://vimeo.com/115346026

Can you describe your present career in light of international professional communication?

Yeah. I'm an evangelist, so my present career is, my job is to instigate change. There are huge problems in the world of communication, and most companies don't actually think of content or communication as a business asset. And they, certainly, seldom respect it enough to put it on the balance sheet, which I believe it belongs on, and that it needs to be managed efficiently and effectively. Instead, what we have is a creative discipline where we allow people to do almost whatever they want. We give them
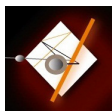
personal computers with a folder called "My Documents," so they feel like they are their documents, and they're not their documents. They belong to the organization that they work for, whoever they are being paid to create content for. But most organizations don't even think about content creators, or communicators, as an asset that needs to be managed in that way, because they wouldn't think about applying processes—strict processes—to them, like they would in a manufacturing plant. So the people who work in the assembly lines, they are viewed as process-oriented, right? But the content creators, they say "Uh, you know, they're creative." I'm like "Well, okay, great, creative people, what? they get drunk, they get high all the time, and so they don't, can't follow directions." I mean, I don't believe any of that. I also believe that creative people can be put into a process, and, then, if you manufacture content the way you manufacture physical goods, you'd be in a much better place. You'd know where you are at any given time. You'd know if there was a slowdown, so, for example, communicators can have things like writer's block. Try that on an assembly line. "I have steering wheel block. Oh, I just can't figure out how to put the steering wheel on the car," and then things just keep going by until the inspector, whose job is to make sure that all the parts are there, and that the product is assembled in the correct way—this could be the job of the editor, right? who could say "Hey, missing a headline, it doesn't have your byline, it doesn't have a photo, it doesn't support our rules."

So, I think my job is to be an agent of change. I'm not trying to do any harm. I'm just trying to point out the craziness that we, somehow, believe is acceptable in today's world, because we were taught these rules fifty years ago by people who were taught, you know, by somebody else from fifty years ago. So I think most of the rules of communication are outdated, and they need revisiting.

What previous experience in international professional communication, if any, has prepared you for your present career?

That's a good question, because that question, in a nutshell, without the international communication spin on it, has been asked to me many times, and the answer is "My job as a nightclub DJ was exactly what prepared me for this world, because, in nightclubs, especially in dance clubs in the 70s, 80s, 90s, they were customized toward a particular audience, so you would hear a song by a band or by a singer like Madonna, but you

could go to a black club, and you would hear an R&B version of it, you could go to a gay bar, and you would hear a slightly housey version, you go to the Latino bar, you would hear something totally different. It's still Madonna singing. It's just a different base track, it's a different drum track." These were customized for the audience, right? for the persona group that the communicators were aiming at. And they used psychic power to decide what to communicate, right? They assemble all the pieces, and they say "That sounds good. I think people will buy it." And I think we do that, you know. We use our psychic power—we don't, we seldom use science, we use psychic power—and we decide that these words that are coming out of our fingers onto the keyboard, or out of our mouths in an interview, are the appropriate ones to say, or to communicate.

And I think, if you think about the fact that even in an audience—the people watching this video, the people who are in a conference hall, sitting there listening to a keynote presenter—they are all different. Marketers treat them as persona groups, and they aim at them, because it's easier for marketers to do that. There is absolutely no benefit to the end user, right? Persona groups are created for the content creators, to make our jobs easier, and so I think when you see what happens when a DJ plays a song, and it does not resonate with the audience, they don't dance. So, my reward structure has been kind of equating the dance, right? If you put a blog post out, and it doesn't get a lot of comments, or your put a blog post out, and people don't actually complain about it or say something about it, then they're not feeling something about it, right? If you speak at a conference and nobody applauds, not doing well. People get up and they leave the room, which is what happens, right? Or, in the case of communicating on behalf of a brand, when you communicate to somebody, and they wanna buy your product and they do, that communication usually comes from marketing—marketing, you know, they wave their shiny magic disco ball to make you entranced and want their product. Then when you get it, what happens? All the other communication you get were created by different people in different parts of the organization, and yet nobody ever bought a product from the marketing department. They bought the product from the brand. So the brand continues to fail them when the technical communication does not sound as easy as the marketing. The marketing was so much fun and easy and all you had to do is reach out and grab the product, because they had it there waiting for. Then you had to learn how to use it. You have to call support and be transferred to

another country, where you're disconnected. Then you have to start all over again. You wait in the queue. Then they tell you they're closed. And when you finally get a hold of somebody, they tell you to check the website. Then they start reading aloud the same things that you're reading from the website.

This is a giant opportunity for us, today, to admit that we suck at communicating to people. By and large, we do. We think that we do a decent job, and I don't believe, today, good enough is good enough. I think that we can do better. We can harness the power of technology. We can harness the power of personalization and personalized content for individuals. We can know things about people. If all the silos in an organization were to communicate to one another, and stop worrying about the external communication—just learn how to communicate to each other, inside—I think we would find that consumers would be less aggravated at the end, and they would be loyal to a brand. And the brands that are good at this—Apple is a prime example—they don't even have to worry. There can be a negative story about how stupid this new device is, and there will be thousands of people at every Apple store, waiting outside to purchase a device that people say is stupid, too big, it bends, it's gonna break, but they'll pay a thousand dollars for it, and they'll wait in the line for it. They're loyal. And so, I think that we can learn some lessons from these companies that have great communication; that across the board, they try to do a better job than anybody else. And I think that means that we have to learn from technical communications.

So, to answer your question, the one job that, outside of my DJ experience, was working in the technical communication field. I worked for a large manufacturer that had a challenge creating content that people could understand. They needed to make software eventually, even though it was not their primary product, but, eventually, software entered the equation—they made software as well to help their product to work better—and that software would run on Macintosh, it would run on Windows, it would run on Unix, and we would have a challenge trying to create a manual that would support all these different groups of people, who were using the same product, but on different product platforms, right? on different computing systems. And so, we would create a big manual, and we would say "If you are on Macintosh, do this." Right? and there would be a screen shot. And you would say to yourself "I'm not on Macintosh. You know I'm not on Macintosh. I just bought the Windows version of this software.

Why are you giving me this information I don't need." It was purely, again, for us. It was easier for us. We could put it all on one big book, and, then, we could say "Oh, my gosh, you can search a pdf. Let's just give it to the customer, and let them find it." Well. that's a lot easier, isn't it? We don't have to do any work, then. We just give them everything and say "Here's everything."

So, I think my lesson from technical communication was that you cannot actually create all these different deliverables and rely on humans to do them alone. If your company does not have an unlimited pool of resources, because the only way your company can grow is to introduce new products to rev up version one, and make version two of your product, right? to make the 2014 version of the Ford car that's now 2015, and so on. And that means that you still have to support the customers that are using the older products, and you have to sell the new products, and create new customers from either the old customers or some prospects that have never interacted with your work. And, in order to produce all that information in a world where, now, you have different devices on which the content is consumed, you don't ever know how skinny it is, or how tall it is, or how wide it is, and so you can't actually finagle with the content, like desktop publishing, and lock it down, because you never know what it's gonna look like at the other end—these are terribly frustrating, confusing things. But if you master them, the way technical communicators—not all of them—but as a discipline, there is a section of technical communication that does very well at producing content that's fluid, that can adapt to the devices, that can adapt to the end user, the personal things about the customer. And I think all communication can benefit from that.

What would you say are particular accomplishments of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

There's so much. There's so much bad stuff and so much good stuff. I think that you get equal doses of both. I would say, recently, the—as I alluded to, before—the technical communication industry created single sourcing, where they would write something once, and they would deliver it to multiple output formats, simultaneously. That discipline has matured into a discipline of its own called intelligent content, which is basically about giving content semantic value, so that it's semantically rich and

highly structured so that both machines and people can consume it and process it. That intelligent content *invention*, if you will, has changed the way that companies think about information—not all of them, but, definitely, some bigger ones—and they are able to be more agile. They are able to do more with less. They are more efficient. They can republish, repurpose their content, almost instantaneously. There's no more handcrafting. There's not as much copy and paste, you know, which is error prone and slow, and not easy to undo, if you just decide later you wanna update all the things that you copied and pasted—how will you remember where you copied and pasted everything? I can't remember where I put my car keys, you know. I think that's the big thing. Silicon Valley is a driver for that, as are any industries in which the products will kill you if they are misused or somehow abused, or just, you know, airplanes, for example, can kill you. So they definitely had a risk, and they were trying to avert the risk, and so, if they could become more efficient, more effective, they could use the extra time they saved to innovate, and to prevent errors, to prevent quality defects, to prevent people dying from products, or drugs, or anything else.

What would you say are some challenges of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I would speak universally, and say the belief that professional communicators' value is, somehow, in... their value is mistakenly viewed as being their communication. And I'll tell you this by example. So, you're supposed to write well. It's not some magical thing. If you can't string three sentences together into some kind of comprehensive… you have bigger issues than whether or not you're a great communicator, right? You're supposed to be able to graduate from high school. I realize in certain countries, including our own, sometimes this is a challenge, but in university settings and professional settings, you're supposed to be able to communicate. Stop talking about how good of a writer you are. You're supposed to be a good writer. You are not supposed to create crappy content. What you're supposed to do, however, that you're not probably doing, is learning about advanced communication practices. So, for example, we live in a world where I argue that we should write... we write for machines first, people second. Okay, of course we write for people. That's the end destination. But first, in between me and the person, is

usually some kind of computer system. There's some wires, there's an electricity, there's the Internet, there's Wi-Fi, there's devices, there's all kinds of other things that come in between us. For example, in the international landscape... so I write in English. Big deal. Only four percent of human beings live in the United States. Only six percent of human beings can understand past the sixth-grade level of information in English. So I need to write content that a machine translation system can understand, if I truly want to be international. If I really want my content to be consumed by people in other nations, I need to supply it in a way that they can consume it, that they understand it, and that happens to be in their own native language. And the only way to get there is either to be able to translate all that—which is ridiculous—or you have to be able to write in a way that a machine can understand it.

Well, we have a lot of problems with the way that we communicate. One of them, when you're trying to use machines to help you translate, is that we use synonyms. You know, those words that almost, kind of, sort of, but not really, mean exactly the same thing, because they are not identical. And yet we treat them like they are. We, and the Japanese, because we're the only two languages—English and Japanese—that have a thesaurus. So, the ridiculous part is that we have ambiguous language. So, of course we put our ambiguous language into Google Translate, and it comes out being garbage, because we don't know how to write for machines. We write lengthy sentences that are grammatically correct, but way too long for a machine to process—which happens to be around 23 words or so, they start to break down—and also sentence structure, between Romance languages and character-driven languages, and other kinds of languages, left to right, right to left. They're different, right? And so we Americans... American English is different than some other English, right? And we put words in different places in a sentence than somebody else, and so, we invent a lot of things ourselves, and we're... you know, we've got ingenuity, this is a good thing. But sometimes we invent things that don't have the shelf life we wish they did.

So, I blame all these problems on my fifth-grade language arts teacher, Mrs. White. You might have had a Mrs. White, too. I had one. They were named different things. But they were fifth grade teachers, who taught us about sentence structure, diagramming, whatever it was that they taught you. But, in my case, they taught us in a book called *Language arts*. Today, we do not need language art, we need language

science. We need to understand how linguistics work. We need to understand how other cultures' language work. We need to understand how the Internet works. We need to know what happens when you ask Siri a question. How does Siri get the answer? And if we don't provide the content in a way that Siri can get the answer and deliver it to the people who were asking the questions, Siri is not going to deliver like "Here's a big-ass pdf, search in there, find out, it's in there, somewhere." It's not gonna happen, right? And so I think, that's one of the biggest challenges, today. It's that we're still locked in these old rules. We also believe, somehow—I don't how this is even possible—but we believe that style guides, somehow, are useful. And I say, style guides are a starting point to being useful. Style guides by themselves—again, going back to the "I can't remember where I put my car keys, but you expect to believe that I can memorize 700 rules, plus all the grammar, linguistics, spelling, and typography rules that I've had to memorize." And, somehow, I'm supposed... you're supposed to believe me that, on demand, I can read content I've never seen before, and recall all of these things, and correct them without making any errors. It's ridiculous. However, in authoring tools today, we can encode style, linguistics, grammar, spelling, and branding rules, and prevent authors from ever making those mistakes. Wouldn't that be a smarter way to do it?

Now, immediately my editor friends say "Oh, my god, he's trying to get rid of our jobs." No, I'm not. I think editors should read the content. They should augment it, and make it better. Maybe they're curators of related information. Maybe they say "This would be a great place for a video to accompany this article or communication of some kind." And they seek out, in their own or external resources, some other piece of content that would further add context and value to the end user.

So, I think it's just a reimagination. We need to reimagine our goals. And we need to reimagine our roles and the responsibilities that we play. And it can no longer be limited to cleaning up typos, and making sure that a portmanteau of a product name goes together with the second word capitalized, because the marketing people would freak out if you don't do it, you know. It just seems like busy work that we need to get rid of. And we need to start focusing on how do we make the content processable by machines? How do we make it fully understandable by humans? And how do we open it up to the world so that we're not limited because of our education? I think these are all problems that we can solve, and they are all doable.

I also speak at the Translation Automation Society. And I've been able to moderate some panel discussions, and they put me on there on purpose—which is kind of funny; my friends who know me say "You don't even speak another language, how can they be inviting you to a translation event." Well, the reason why is that I understand technology, and I understand how content and technology work together. And so they asked me to moderate a panel between language service providers, so companies that sell translation and localization services, and people who buy them who work for big companies, and there is a huge disconnect. The people who buy them are getting offered new disruptive technologies like crowd-sourced translation, like most Facebook content is translated by Facebook customers. We're talking about the Facebook interface. Now, not the legal statement, 'cause that will get them sued, right? The lawyers have to do that, and there needs to be lawyers in the country in which the person is reading the notice. It's not really useful to have a California notice in Italian, right? Like, if you're in Italy, really, the California law has nothing to do with Italy. So, there needs to be some kind of… you know, we need to come together to try to figure out how to solve all these problems. But I think there is a bigger issue here about thinking through the process of what our communication is supposed to be *today*, in the world that we live in, and future proofing it for tomorrow. Stop worrying about what the rules were in the past. It doesn't really matter anymore, because we can't go backwards. But we *can* go forwards.

How do you see technology or changes in technology impacting, maintaining, or altering international professional communication practice, research, and/ or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

This all goes back to the same question of whether or not we're creating the right *kinds* of communication. So, in text-based communication, I think, there is an argument to be made either way. So, most of the time, think back to when you were a child, and you were very excited, something happened, and you ran up to an adult, and you tried to explain, but it was all discombobulated, 'cause you were freaking out about whatever it *is*, right? Especially if it's the first time it's ever happened to you. Somebody got hurt, and there's something, you know, and you try to tell an adult. Often they say "Slow down. Start at the beginning. Tell me, tell me what happened." This happens every

time a police officer enters the equation. "Blah blah blah blah blah." Everybody wants to tell the officer "It's his fault. It's her fault. Blah blah blah." And they're all fighting. And the officer says "Step back. One at a time. What happened? Start at the beginning, and tell me a story."

I think we've been trapped in the narrative—and that, today, there is a need for non-narrative content. Content without so much context. Content that's kind of, you know, out there on its own. Answers to questions, for example. When you talk to Siri, you're not asking Siri to do an evaluation of something for you. You know, when you query Google, you're asking "Help me find this. I need the answer to this." And the problem is, most of our communication is locked up inside documents and videos and audio files. And it's not extractable. There is not enough… there's no, or insufficient semantic information inside to allow a computer to go inside to pull out just the answer. So, the only things that we get answers to are the things that have been provided in modules—modular content, kind of componentized-based content. And when you have components of content—which is what I believe we should have more of—you can mix and match them, you can recombine them, much the way DJs recombine sounds so that they can make Madonna appropriate for different audiences. And if we can recombine content, repurpose it, and share it with others… For example, what if an audience could take the content that you communicate and repurpose it and reimagine it and remix it, themselves? Like, why shouldn't they be able to? I don't understand. If it's useful information to them, and you've provided it, why do you care? Now they can do it, today. They can go to your web page and copy a paragraph and paste it someplace else. But we're not making it easy for them.

So think about this. The *New York Times*. No doubt, journalistic prowess. Great writing. Good investigative reporting, no doubt. However, they released a report called the Innovation report—*release* is the wrong word; it was leaked. It was a one-hundred page internal investigation about the readiness of the *New York Times* to be able to compete in the world in which they exist today and in the future. And the short answer is: They're not ready. They're way behind. They've ignored things for years that they should have paid attention to. They didn't invest in the technologies that should have invested in. They didn't invest in teaching writers that their value is not in writing only, that they have to understand technology. So, now, they have disrupters. *BuzzFeed*,

Huffington Post. They can get millions, tens of millions of hits off the same content that the *New York Times* should be getting. But the *New York Times* traffic? Down. Every year, every day, it never goes up. Doesn't matter: Mobile? Down. Ebooks? Down. Website? Down. It doesn't matter because they are not where people are. People are on Facebook. That's where *Huffington Post* is, and where *BuzzFeed* is, and where everybody else is. So those pseudo-media organizations—'cause that's exactly what the *New York Times* thought of them, I'm sure, and they also thought... other journalists thought the same thing earlier in our lifetime with *USA Today*, which they used to call McDonald's news, right? It was just snack-size news, not really news. So they won't be around long, right? They said the same thing about the *Huffington Post*. They're like, they read other peoples' articles and, then, summarize them. And they're like, Right, and millions of people wanted to read this stuff, right?

So the *New York Times* did do something really cool. They created a collection. What they have is an asset, a content library that's an asset. They have millions of articles of the last hundred years or so. And what they were able to do was they were able to assemble a story *collection*, if you will, of a topic—in this case, I think it was brothels, they were writing about brothels, something about the Netherlands—and they expanded on it, and they went back in history, and they had all these pictures of, you know, brothels that were in the newspaper—in America and other countries. Articles, stories, statistics, facts—for the last hundred years. They called it a collection. Then, they promoted it. It was one of the highest ranking pieces of content they've ever produced. However, they can't do it quickly. They have to do it by hand. Which means they can't respond to change. The minute that somebody else wants to do it, they're gonna do it faster than the *New York Times*, and they're going to populate it, while the *New York Times* is still messing around in the news room, trying to copy and paste content that they're, you know, making mistakes, and formatting by hand, like it's all very 1988, there. And they recognize that this is a huge challenge.

But why that's important is that it's not about the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* could have owned the conversation on this, and the irony is they would have been extremely popular with audience, and they would have attracted a huge amount of attention if they would have released that one hundred-page report in the newspaper, and interviewed every corporate person in big companies and vendors that

know, because they sell software and services to help you do better, and companies that are overwhelmed, or have been in lawsuits because of their content. Those people would have told the *New York Times* because they're reputable as a journalism piece, you know. It's not like being invited to be embarrassed on television. This is something where they could have owned the conversation. And they could have been--went out and hired the best people to do the best work. You know, snatch them from Silicon Valley and other places and built a world class media empire for the 21st century. But they're not. You know, they're still trying to figure it out. Now, they are embarrassed now, because the report was made public. So they are definitively making strides in the right direction.

But one of the key things in the report, which I believe is true for all communication across most organizations, is that it gets more expensive to fix this problem the longer you wait. And the second point was disrupters will enter your field. They enter education. And they take jobs from professors. So people in academia should get with the picture quicker than anybody else, but they don't either. They sit back and they rest on their tenure, and they rest on their experience, and then they think "You know. Whatever." And then that department gets defunded. Why do you think there is a School of Information? I lecture at UC Berkeley's School of Information. It's the demise of library science that no one signed up for. Yeah, there's value in library science, but not if there is no students. If no students show up, what is the value? Right? So we had to take and merge computer science with information science and library science, and bring it all together. And then, there wasn't even a cohesive way to teach the intersection until some of the professors actually created it.

And so, I think this is all new turf is what I'm saying. The research has been around for years. There are companies that have been doing better than other companies. They don't want you to know, so it's not easy to see, because if it's a competitive advantage, why are they gonna tell you? Or educators? Right? Because they want to keep their story a secret. You'll never see an Apple employee at a typical content conference. Think back. Unless it was Steve Jobs or the CEO, their employees are forbidden from telling what they do. Why? 'Cause they do it better. They know it. They invest in it. They really treat communication as critical. When was the last time you saw a television commercial that was an ad, a marketing piece, and technical documentation? The very first iPhone commercial was, and, since then, they've had dozens of them. They held up

the phone. They started touching it. They asked Siri to find a sushi restaurant. People were bedazzled. It's marketing. It's advertising. It's technical documentation. And, to a certain extent, it's training, because if you buy an iPhone and you watch the commercial, if you do what's on the screen, Siri will find a sushi restaurant for you too. But think about that. They had to make a conscious decision to unify that communication, to make sure that it fulfilled all the needs: it had desire, sexy—you know, it was sexy—it was informative, it was useful, it was different than anything else, and it provided a solution you couldn't get anywhere else. So it's amazing.

What kinds of international and intercultural experiences and skill sets has higher education taught students to help them transition to industry? In what ways could higher education do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

Higher education institutions—and I'm certainly not an expert on what every higher institution is doing, right? with their education, today; so I don't really know what every school and university is doing—but I would say, for the most part, I was fortunate when I was educated, because I was educated in a campus where I had both professors and instructors. The instructors were usually professionals who are in the field. For instance, I was taught by a two-time Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, the only journalist to win two Pulitzers in a row, who only graduated from seventh grade, by the way, never went to high school or college, and still ended up becoming a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner. And he taught me more than any other, you know, instructor, because he taught me practical stuff. He would take us underneath bridges and make us look at the crumbling infrastructure of the bridges so we could write about bridges. He would make us go and work with the bridge repair people. He would make us go and learn about train tracks that go over the bridge, and why it's so critical for the bridge to have the support that it has. He didn't tell us to go to the library and read. He would take us out, and meet the actual people who do the work, and they were hypnotized by a whole bunch of students. They couldn't imagine that we would want to know what they did, you know. So it was very practical.

So, I think one of the best things that higher education has done is incorporated professionals into the mix. For me, I co-lecture with a professor, and I'm often brought

in, I think, just to do the reality check at what's going on the field, to wax poetic about what I've seen recently—maybe inspire them to do something different. But I'm also a troublemaker. I think that universities need that. It's not really sufficient for—and I'm going to get hate mail for this—it's not really sufficient for some kind of academic to be sitting in the cubicle forever, because my question is "When was the last time you had a real job?" And this is the kind of response I get "Education is a real job." And I'm like "Not if you're teaching technical documentation. When was the last time you documented a medical device? When was the last time that you documented a nuclear device? When was the last time that you documented a process for a pharmaceutical company? When was... If you haven't done this stuff in a while, you really do not actually know that rhetoric, no one freaking asked for that. It is never, ever, ever... I'm pretty confident, if there's any time that there was ever rhetoric listed on a job requirement, it was written by an academic. Because no one asks for this shit. They just want people to have the practical skills, and that's really hard to give you... to get from a university. We know that universities should be teaching you how to think critically, how to go out and find your own answers. That's all great, important stuff. But when I have students coming out of the educational system who still are being taught by people about writing, and it's only about writing, or it's about communicating, and they skip over the other things that they're gonna need to know—like change management, work flow, governance; governance, yeah, you're gonna have people boss you around, you're gonna be responsible for stuff, and, by the way, all that stuff that your teacher told you won't matter. When you go to get your job, they're gonna be like "It doesn't matter, anymore. I don't care what your professors told you."

So, I think there needs to be a balancing act between professionals and academics, and they need to come together more often. But, it's really up to the university program administrators to drag, you know, probably some of the academics kicking and screaming. Because it is kind of insensitive in some respects to… I think when it really gets to be important is when you ask for students to evaluate the instructors and the instructors do better than the professors. That, right there... you know... And that's not always the case. I'm not slamming all of them. I know some wonderful professors. I personally benefit from them all the time. But I do think that there is a challenge in academics to bring them together, and I think that you can learn from one another.

Now, how could industry and academia work better together? Well, certainly the School of Information… In fact, I just recently refereed a translation company who wanted to try to figure out "How can we get students to start leaving school thinking about translation and localization?" Where do they send them? Some foreign affairs thing, or some department that has something to do with *foreign*, right? It's like, okay. But what about every other person who's graduating from this university? We're communicating on Facebook. I don't have a problem connecting with people. I have a problem communicating with them. I can connect with people from Saudi Arabia. I just can't speak Arabic, right? And so, I think the challenge is: How do we prepare this new generation of students, with all education that we have that we learned from other people—and I'm not talking about doing new research. Of course, we do new research, and we learn new things. But there's a lot of stuff that's inherent that we just keep passing down, like somehow it's the torch, and you're just supposed to give to the next student generation, and they're supposed to run with it, and then they teach their kids the same thing, and it goes down, forever. For example, the thesaurus rule, right? don't ever use the same word more than two or three times in the first couple of paragraphs. That's not even a rule, right? That's so squishy that it's got holes in it, all over the place. And yet, we think that that's a rule, so we continue to teach it. We talk about things that are really out of context, today. Storytelling. Ah, it's critical—if you have time for a story. First, you should say "What do you want? Do you want a story? Or do you want an answer. Oh, you want an answer. Wait, let me give you the answer, right?"

And I think that academia and partnerships with private industry like translation companies that want to prepare students. But they don't want to prepare foreign language students to translate. They should be able to. I mean, they should at least be closer to translators if they learn multiple languages. They want all communicators to know what barriers they are placing in their communication for other people to understand. For example, in the United States, dozens… well, what?… tens of millions of Spanish-speaking people from other countries have English as a second language, and we introduce a bunch of confusing lingo because our fifth-grade teacher taught us to. And they are trying to understand our language. It is not their language. So, if we were more cognizant of plain English, for example, instead of complicated creative

writing English, we would be more successful in reaching those audiences, and compel them to do whatever we want them to do with our communication.

What has industry done well to help higher education teach international and intercultural experiences and skill sets, or to help their own employees develop such experiences and skill sets? What else might industry do to help prepare the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

This is an easy one, because industry hasn't done enough. However, it depends on your goal. Every business, every industry, every sector, every company, every nonprofit should have a mission, right? That's what they exist to do. But the mission is often confused with the goal. Goal is part of strategy. I want to become the largest seller of smartphones in the southwest by 2004... in the southwest United States, the largest seller to Latino-Americans in the southwest United States by 2018. That's measurable. It's probably achievable. It's not crazy if you're the No. 2 handset seller and you wanna become No. 1, and you've got your targeted market, you know where you're gonna put your resources. You'll also know whether you fail, right? And so, we need to be able to communicate these industry stories to people and help academia understand, and help other employees, you know, know what's going on in the world. And, I think, by sharing best practices and lessons learned, we get closer to that... and case studies, and webinars, and books, I mean. It's just that, if it's not in the goal of the company, it's usually seen as extraneous.

And so, only the probably biggest, most widely funded companies have budgets to do these kind of partnerships with academia, or to even, you know, train their own people. And training is kind of a hot-button word, too, because training is something that fits into a variety of *packages*, if you will. So, I don't fancy training being going to a conference—and, yet, I run conferences. I just never call them training. Because it's not training. You might learn a few nuggets when you are sitting in there, and you might be entertained, if you're lucky. But it's doubtful that you're gonna learn how to do something, right? It's not a college course.

So I think we need to figure out how to leverage continuing education in meaningful ways so that training and workshops, and things of that nature, are included

in the company culture and not just in the HR brochure that says "Everybody gets you... We respect you. We want you to be learning all the time." They actually have to build into their calendar time for people to get off work, to be able to stop working on the project that they're working on at that time, to be able to try to learn something else. And I think they also have to be challenged, you know, to do so. I think the failing is in that most industry does not behave that way. Most people are happy with their good enough job. They're doing whatever they're doing. And if they're not motivated and they don't push, the company doesn't come chasing after them. So that training doesn't ever occur. And I've worked in some pretty big, you know, companies. And I've seen training be not training at all, in fact: a PowerPoint printed out, three-hole binders stuck, you know, stuck in a three-hole punch binder called Training. No assessment. No questions. They have no idea whether they learned it. They just said like, "Flip through it and then sign this paper." And I was signing a paper saying that I learned and I was trained on such-and-such methodology. I wasn't trained on anything!

So, I think there needs to be a critical look at what it is that we're trying to do, whether we're educating people, whether it's part of the goal of the company. And, if it is, then does that make any sense to take part of that money and spend it outside so that the next generation of students who come out of the school will have the skills that we need—because they don't. Silicon Valley, several other places, maybe, you know, around the world, have some great schools where people are coming out with the requisite skills, and certainly law schools produce lawyers and dental schools produce dentists— I'm not talking about that. But, I mean, just information and communicators, by and large. I don't think there's a... I don't... I guess, I feel like the silos that separate various departments in a company are also existing outside of the company. There are silos between different kinds of communicators—medical writers, and technical writers, and marketing writers, and... trade associations—the marketing people don't talk to the technical people; in fact, they make fun of each other. And, you know, until we all learn to... that we're servicing the same customer, the customer is the consumer of our content, of our communication, and that as long as we pretend that being different is acceptable, they're gonna have confusing experiences with our communication because we are not unified. We're not fighting to create an exceptional experience with our communication. Instead, we're just doing our job. And, then, when something fails and it's downstream, we say "That's not my department."

You know, I think companies have to restructure. They have to be able to think across silos. They have to be able to reward employees for thinking outside the box. And, if they were to do that, I think we would see more stories, more lessons, more best practices, and people would share. But I do believe the failing of most large organizations is that they don't encourage us to do that. I think there is lip service to it. "Oh, yeah, we're open for suggestions!" And "Come and see us!" But, I think, if you've done it a couple times, and you didn't get a great warm and fuzzy "We valued that opinion, and that was really useful," I don't think people, then, volunteer to do it again. And I think that's a problem. I think that the company without the people who'd want to make improvements, and to share with others—if the company doesn't encourage it, and doesn't allow it, or doesn't promote it—it makes it harder for the communicators to want to share. You know. So they just sit at their desk, and they do their job. Not all of them, 'cause there's always a loudmouth like me that's gonna fight—try to fight the good fight—even if it means I have to leave the building before long. But those are, probably, some of the things that we could do better. ■

About the Interviewee

Scott Abel is a content management strategist and social media choreographer with strengths in helping organizations improve the way they author, maintain, publish and archive their information assets. His formal education was in journalism. He worked as a technical writer for ten years. Scott has experience in XML-based enterprise content management strategy, high tech marketing communications, business process analysis, technical writing and editing, crowd-sourcing, social networking, usability, content localization, and designing single source solutions.

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connexions interview with

KATHERINE (KIT) BROWN-HOEKSTRA

Transcript of the interview with Katherine (Kit) Brown-Hoekstra, principal at Comgenesis, LLC, in the United States of America. Kit is an award-winning writer and consultant with a background in science and over 20 years of experience in technical communication. She is currently serving as president of the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

This interview was recorded for issue 2(1). It was conducted by Rosário Durão, via Skype, on November 12, 2014, and transcribed from the recorded interview by Quan Zhou, *connexions*' section editor.

The video recording of this interview is available on the *connexions* Vimeo channel at https://vimeo.com/115350011

Can you describe your present career in light of international professional communication?

Well, everything I do, currently, is related to international communication. Right now, I'm working with two clients, helping them build better global processes and content so that they can sell their products and services overseas more effectively, and more easily and efficiently; and working with them on their localization process. So, everything I do is related to that international communication and getting content ready for the global market.
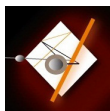
What previous experience in international professional communication, if any, has prepared you for your present career?

Virtually every job I've had in my career has had some component of international communication. One of my first jobs was working for a cardiac pacemaker company. And part of my job was to be the liaison between the technical communication department and the localization vendor. And so, that experience—which was the first time I'd ever really been exposed to localization—and so, that experience got me really interested in the problems and challenges and opportunities that are available with international communication. And it made me realize that everything I do needs to be done and designed with the world in mind. Because even if I'm not, currently, localizing the product, I might someday. And anything that I do to support my source audience and make that content more clear in the source content is also gonna help localization, as well.

What would you say are particular accomplishments of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Well, I think what's really interesting is that I've been working in international communication for more than 20 years. And for a long, long time, it felt like I was starting from ground zero, every time I talked to somebody about it. But really interestingly, in the last three, probably, years, I've noticed just a big shift in the awareness of the need for global communication amongst American companies, amongst STC members, and just an increasing awareness and an increasing knowledge of what it's gonna, what it takes to create good international communication. And then, at the CPSTC... CPTSC conference in Colorado Springs—the acronyms!—it was very interesting to sit in on the global communication STEM for the day that Pam Brewer had created for talking about that, and hearing what some of the programs are doing to teach international communication, because I think that's a core skill for students coming out of a tech comm program today—because, if you have a website, you can potentially be a global company, whether you're translating your content, or not.

The other thing that's important to know is that 11% of the U.S. population, 40% of the Canadian population, are non-native English speakers. And so, even if you're not translating your content, creating that content in simplified, you know, controlled language, using controlled language following some of the principles that you would use for translation in your source content will help those nonnative English speakers, even if they're not reading translated content. So those are some things I think that are really coming to the fore in the past few years, in terms of making progress. Also, I think the technology has improved to the extent that it allows us to more effectively and more efficiently, you know, push content through the localization process.

What would you say are some challenges of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Even though awareness has gotten better, I think that there's still a huge gap between those of us who work daily with localization and work daily with international communication, and those people who don't really necessarily understand that that's what they need to be doing. And so, I think that that's one of the challenges: continuing to build that awareness, continuing to improve the technology, continuing to work with localization vendors and help them move upstream in their client processes, and things like that. One of the things, you know, that's becoming really popular for many companies is doing Agile development. And so, now, what that means is that, then, the localization vendors need, are challenged to "How do I provide services in an Agile environment?" And so, there... in the last... I was just at Localization World, in Vancouver, and several of the sessions were discussions about how do you provide, continue to provide good quality service in that environment, and also pull ourselves upstream into the content development process.

When we first started doing localization 20... well, I mean, there's always been localization, but when industry started requiring localization—you know, the medical industry in 1990, when the EU put the directive that you will translate everything; that's really when things kinda took off—was when there started to be regulatory requirements for it. People were just happy to have content in their own language, and it was often, like, months later that they got it. Today, a customer expects it, not

only in their local language, but the same day that it's available everywhere else in the world. And with the same quality of content. And so... and customers are becoming more sophisticated. So, if they have a choice between a product that is created that sounds like it was made in their country and one that looks, that's obviously localized, they're gonna pick the one that feels like it was made in their country and feels more comfortable to their culture. And so, then you get, you start getting into "What degree of localization do I have to provide in order to support this customer at the level that they need to be supported? What's the ROI? Where's the cost–benefit line?" You know.

So, those are some of the challenges we're constantly defining, we're constantly expanding into new languages—it used to be that it was French, Italian, German, Spanish, maybe Greek, and Japanese and Chinese. And, now, most companies are doing 15, 20, 30, 40 languages. So you've got the scalability issue, as well. So, what works when you're only translating one or two languages, might not work if you're translating 30 or 40 languages, in terms of process.

So, those are some of the challenges that people have. And also, there's always that cost pressure, in localization. You know, everybody wants to do it as cheaply as possible—which may or may not be what really supports the customer the most. And so, again, you have to look at the size of your market, whether it's worth the cost to translate into that local environment. And yet, if you're in a regulated industry, like medical or financial, you probably have to, if you want to sell in that market. So, those are some of the challenges.

You say that something that works when you are translating into one language does not necessarily work when you are translating, or localizing, into 12 languages or more. Can you provide an example?

Well, first of all, if you have a 100 files—source language files—that you're translating into French, okay? I don't, necessarily, have to have a content management system or an automated process to manage those 100 files for one language. But, if I'm doing that with 30 or 40 languages, I'd better have some kind of automation built in there, because that 100 source files equals 100 files in every language that you're translating into.

The other thing is that, if you're only translating into one language, or, you're just doing English, you can get away with manually doing style overrides, and things like that—you shouldn't, but you can get away with it easier. But if you've, all of a sudden, got 20 or 30 languages, and you're doing style overwrites in every language, you've just added probably tens of thousands of dollars to your localization cost, just by doing that. If you're not optimizing your graphics for international audience, it's… you can get away with, if you're doing one language, recreating that graphic for that language. But if you're doing 30 or 40 languages, you can't afford to recreate that graphic for every single language.

So, those are the kinds of issues. And, then, you've got the feedback loop between you and the localization vendor, as well. You know, are you getting your, you know, if they're only translating into one language, maybe they can tweak the, they can fix any problems that they find. But again, 30 or 40 languages, you've just, you've exponentially increased your cost. So, pulling that stuff upstream, improving the quality in the source, and automating, finding ways to automate some of these, the more tedious parts of the process are what you have to do when you start expanding into other languages.

How do you see technology or changes in technology impacting, maintaining, or altering international professional communication practice, research, and/ or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Well, I think the last 25 and 30 years have just seen a huge change in the way we do our business and run our lives, just in general. And if you think about it, even the last 5 years, we've seen huge changes because of the advent of mobile and the maturity, the increasing maturity of mobile technology. So, now, where I used to have, have to work in an office and have, you know, and transfer files manually, and do things, you know, all that… that's all automated. So, from that regard, we have… there are, now, apps that allow you to do machine… well, there's machine translation available right off Google, right? Google Translate is a machine translation thing. So, it's not necessarily a good one from a professional translation perspective but, if it's an email from my in-laws, you know, I can put it through Google Translate and get the gist, and understand, you know, what I need to do.

So, technology is changing the way we view localization, and makes it easier and more accessible. For the professional translator, there are now mobile apps that, if they get an assignment, they can be anywhere. They can be sitting on the beach, and, if they have a smart phone and the right app, they can, they can do the translation right there, you know. They don't have... we're not tied to an office, any more. We're not tied to a particular location. You know, it used to take days or weeks to get information from one part of the world to the other. Now, we can communicate with the space station in milliseconds, you know, and virtually anywhere on the planet in milliseconds. And so, all of those changes mean that the speed with which we have to provide localization, localized products, if we want simultaneous release, also increases. And so, we have to find ways to automate, and make more efficient all of those processes. So, I think… you know, and then we're talking... that's not even talking about social media and social... so you're talking, you know, how do you translate Twitter? You know, is it...? There's a lot of discussion about that. Is crowd sourcing the way to go with that? Is it...? Is machine translation the way to go? You know, is...? And, maybe, it's a combination of all of these things. Or should it be professionally translated? Because, then, you have... risk of miscommunication because of poor translation. So you have to think about the ethics, the technology, the ability of the technology, the capabilities of the technology, the speed of change, the expectations of the customers, and manage all of those things.

You speak a lot about translation and about localization, but it seems that translation plays a huge part in localization.

Translation is part of localization, but not the whole story. So, translation is probably what most people think about when they talk about localization. Because translation is the transference of concepts from one language to another, so that people can be understood. Localization adds to that cultural expectations, color choice, layout design, regulatory, those... those kinds of issues that are culturally specific. So, in addition to transferring the content, the meaning of the content from one language to another, you are also identifying how to present it. Some cultures are more formal than others. For example, I would not say something the same way in Japanese that I would say it in Spanish. I would not speak to a coworker the same way in Spanish that I would speak

to my boss. For example, I would use a more formally, the more formal *you*. English doesn't necessarily make those distinctions. And so, part of localization is understanding what level of formality is required for that particular application. Sometimes, there are choices of words that mean the same, maybe mean the same thing, but have more or less technical or specific context... so, where choice terminology management becomes part of that localization and translation. Regulatory, graphical... graphic design, and what are the cultural expectations so the ethnography of the locale that you're going into, that all comes into play with the localization. It gets, it comes through with the translation, but translation is only part of that.

What kinds of international and intercultural experiences and skill sets has higher education taught students to help them transition to industry? In what ways could higher education do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

That's a challenging question because it's... You know, I think that the principles of creating content for international audiences need to be built in to every technical communication class that's taught. There, also, then need to be classes that offer a deeper dive into the theory and practice of international communication, multicultural communication. I think that we need to start teaching foreign languages at an earlier age in the U.S. school systems. And I think it needs to be compulsory. You know, that some foreign language education needs to be compulsory at a younger age because, not being able to speak, fluently speak a second or third language puts you at a huge disadvantage in today's society. Yes, English is the language of doing business, worldwide, but flavors of English are very different in different regions. And wouldn't it, isn't it kind of weird to be sitting in a room with a bunch of Chinese or Japanese business people and not be able to understand anything that they're saying, during really intense negotiations. I think you need to, at least, have a base level of knowledge of a few other languages, and I would, probably, if I was picking a language today, I would pick Mandarin, you know, or Spanish, depending on what part of the US you live in. But, you know, if you wanna be in international business, definitely Mandarin, or Japanese, or something like that. So, I think you need to have some knowledge of another language because, unless

you know how to speak another language, or at least understand the learning process for acquiring another language, it's very difficult to understand how those other, how those people that you're communicating with think, because how you think is dictated by your language and the way that you... is, to a certain extent, dictated by your language and the way that you express yourself.

It also helps you understand the cultural things. It may not be as obvious. You know, there are some things that are obvious, when you first look at somebody, or when you first meet somebody, you know, that cultural differences or cultural similarities. Other things are a little less obvious until you communicate, you've been communicating with them longer, and understanding another language helps you understand their world-view, helps you understand what's important to that culture, because, if they don't have a word for it, maybe it's not that... maybe that isn't something that's important, or known, in a particular culture.

And, just having that base level of knowledge gives you a more open mind, I think, and helps you understand what your cultural biases are because, anytime you're working multiculturally, one of the most important phases is understanding what your personal biases and cultural assumptions are, so that you know if something is making you uncomfortable so that you can identify "Is this a cultural assumption? Is it something that's really happening?" you know. And maybe take a broader view of this situation, rather than taking something personal that might not have been intended that way. It might just be the way that culture communicates. So, I think all of those things are really important. And I think every child in... on the planet should be exposed to those concepts at a very early age.

What has industry done well to help higher education teach international and intercultural experiences and skill sets, or to help their own employees develop such experiences and skill sets? What else might industry do to help prepare the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

There are partner industry–university partnerships where they do coop... I forget what it's called, cooperative education, or something like that, where they spend a semester taking classes and, then, a semester working. I think those are really valuable experiences.

IFixit, at the CPTSC conference, was telling us about a program that they have where they partner with programs... with technical communication programs to create actual content for their website, and work with them to help them promote. .. I'm not sure that it's, necessarily, international communication per se, but when I was talking to them, there's definitely a component that could be added that would, you know, in terms of translating the content, and preparing the source content for translation and localization—that they're talking about how they could build that in.

So, I think there are a lot of little... things that are happening, kind of in a one-off situation where the company is partnering with one university and donating the equipment, or donating software, or donating time, you know, or having coops and internships. But I don't think there is really a... umbrella of... you know, a consortium of companies that are saying "Okay, this is what we're going to do to support international communication." I think it's more of a one-on-one relationship kind of thing. And I... would it be nice if that was more of a kind of organized thing? Sure, but I don't know that that's realistic, you know. I think it's gonna continue just being personal relationships with academics and industry professionals.

Are there any final comments you would like to make?

This is one of my favorite topics, so I could talk about it for days. But I would say, if I was a student, today, interested in international communication, I would be attempting to get those multicultural experiences. I would... if I'm looking to hire somebody I want, somebody that has that multicultural experience, that understanding of how to write for an international audience, how to simplify my content, you know... I didn't talk at all about the QA, the editing QA and change management processes. Those are absolutely critical to successful localization because localization is very much garbage in garbage out, so having solid editing and QA and change management processes, and understanding what that means, I think, make you more hirable, and also... and not just for localization, but also for content management system... you know, working in a content management system, those are important; for working for accessibility, those are important.

I've been thinking a lot about this, lately, that there's a lot of overlap between accessibility—which is usually meant to refer to people with disabilities or different

abilities, and how they access and utilize, and use the content—there's a lot of overlap between what works for that audience and what works for localization. So, we need to start thinking about how can we build it into our processes. It shouldn't be a separate thing. International communication should just be communication. That it should be built in as a standard... and as a best practice. ■

About the Interviewee

Katherine (Kit) Brown-Hoekstra is an STC Fellow and STC 2014-15 Society president, an experienced professional, and a small business owner with over 23 years of experience in technical communication, much of it working with localization teams (sometimes on the client side and sometimes on the vendor side). As principal of Comgenesis, LLC, Kit provides consulting and training to her clients on a variety of topics, including localization, content strategy, and content management. She has a BS in biology and an MS in technical communication, both from Colorado State University.

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connexions interview with

RICARDO MUÑOZ MARTÍN

Transcript of the interview with Ricardo Muñoz Martín, Professor of Translation Studies in the School of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, in Spain. Ricardo is also a part-time freelance translator.

The interview was recorded for issue 2(1). The interview was conducted by Rosário Durão, via Skype, on November 14, 2014, and transcribed from the recorded interview by Quan Zhou, *connexions*' section editor.

The video recording of this interview is available on the *connexions* Vimeo channel at https://vimeo.com/115348382

Can you describe your present career in light of international professional communication?

Well, I'm actually working as a professor of translation studies at the Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria, in Spain. But I like to think of myself as a part-time freelance translator, something I have been doing since the 80s.

What previous experience in international professional communication, if any, has prepared you for your present career?

I worked as a full-time freelance translator in Germany by the end of the 90s, and then in California at the beginning of the 90s. I have part timed ever since.
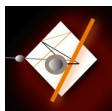
And then as a translation scholar, I keep close contact with scholars from many different countries, and we do have international professional communication in multilateral settings, nearly on a daily basis, in the last 20 years.

Do you see translation and translation studies as being separate from international professional communication?

No, not at all. I think that translation and interpreting are just one branch of international professional communication.

What, from your past experience as a translator, has helped you as an academic, and vice versa?

Translators learn that expectations and ways of viewing things are different in different speech communities. And that actually gives you a lot of insight on how to improve communication between people from different cultures and areas in the world—which is not only in different languages; sometimes, it is even within the same language.

And, then, research has opened up many venues of both learning and thinking, because we tend to assume many things and states of affairs that research will show that are not the way we thought. Usually, they are more complex. For instance, many people will complain about borrowing words from a different language. And, in my experience, the words that get borrowed usually end up meaning different things and being used in different ways so that, actually, they only superficially resemble the words in other languages.

What, in your background as a researcher, influenced your teaching and your practice as a translator?

I have a very good example that I actually want to formally study now, which is that students tend to lack concentration when they are writing. And so I decided to test how it would work to get students to translate against the clock. First, you need to make sure that they understand that quality is still first. But, then, that they should do it in such a way that they can pay the rent. And, usually in about eight to ten weeks, their productivity gets a boost and the quality slowly recovers so that, by the end of a

semester, they usually translate nearly twice as fast and at the same quality they did before.

What would you say are particular accomplishments of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Well, I'm afraid that the answer to this question may sound a little vague. Let me try. In general, I think that Western societies have become more aware of the need to professionalize international communication. In research, I think there is an increased cross-fertilization between writing and translation research, at least in the small area of cognitive approaches I usually consider my domain. In pedagogy, trainers have become much more professional and market oriented than they were in the 80s and the 90s.

Now, in the narrower realm of translation and interpreting, and in Spain, the publishing industry has been serving Spanish speakers in all continents and, therefore, Spain has many more translators than the ones you would expect in a country of its size; that's gonna change now. The way that we enjoy the tourist infrastructure, competitive prices have fostered a convention industry that makes millions every year. We tend to think only of written international professional communication, but the market for spoken language services is also huge and growing. Take us, we're talking to each other through the Atlantic.

You say the number of translators is going to change. What makes you say that?

Well, because both the economy and the education are improving in many Latin American countries, so the market is going to spread and grow there and, therefore, it will have to shrink here.

Communication industries are changing rapidly, and, for instance, DVDs imply that, now, dubbing and subtitling are being done at the source, and not at the receiving end of the chain, which means that, for instance, dubbing and subtitling are done much more, now, in California than it used to be in Spain, before, for the Spanish market.

How do you envisage the role of instantaneous communication and sites like ProZ, where you put out a call and you have translators all over the place applying—how do you see this affecting translation management?

Well, the market is going to diversify. That's certainly so. And new technologies are fostering new ways of communication. We, in Spain, are happy to think that we can offer very good quality in general, but this is not a country matter. The pyramid is going to be taller, now, and also wider. In fact, it is doing so at the same time that the non-professional international communication is growing like crazy. I mean, the Web 2.0 has made it possible that everybody will contact everybody, anywhere in the world. You can tell the quality of the texts is getting lower, even though professionals are many more and better trained than before.

What would you say are some challenges of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

It does depend on the country. In many countries, as professionalization is still in progress, you get big companies that know that professional communication is worth every penny you put in them. But medium-sized and small companies don't really understand yet how much they would improve or benefit from hiring international professional communicators.

And academia does not understand it, yet. Communication studies is spread all over several disciplines, and we need to get together to take advantage of the synergies that now are getting lost. Many people still do not understand the nature of communication studies in general, and their specificity. Also—let me get a little bit serious, here—in many European countries, the universities are transitioning from mass educational approaches that were focused on raising the general educational level of the population, to professional universities—approaches that demand individualized and flexible training programs and, therefore, more investment and more coordination efforts that are, yet, still in their first steps. I think that, as far as pedagogy is concerned, in the case of translation, which is the case I know very well, I know that they will definitely benefit from being trained as technical writers.

How do you imagine a program, or a course of study, in which both components (writing and translating) would come together? Do you envision this as a possibility or a requirement, and how would you see them being implemented?

I think that technical writing is a prerequisite to many kinds of translation. And I think that translation courses, in some cases, may be beneficial for technical writers, too. Technical writing demands mental organization of the information, and an initiative that translators tend to forget about, because they assume a much more passive role in front of the original text; whereas translators tend to look for a thoroughness in the nuances of the messages that technical writers may forget because they are not constrained by an original text.

Do you see a place for collaborations like the Trans-Atlantic Project to develop? And do you see a place for a different type of program being offered—a program with both a writing component and a translation component?

Yes, I think so. I think Bruce has been doing a great job. There are also some precedents in the work of George Gouadec, in Rennes 2, in France, who made international competitions of translation teams, of translation trainees, that had to work on certain projects and communicate, and find out what was going on at the other side of the computer, you know, thousands of miles away. I do think that translation programs and writing programs should be more independent and closer to each other than they are, or have been, in many places. And I also think that we would both save money and diversify the training possibilities that we can offer in our institutions, by cooperating.

I think we are going to renew our syllabi, and this is the perfect moment to start thinking about cooperating with people other than the traditional language and literature departments we usually work with.

How do you see technology or changes in technology impacting, maintaining, or altering international professional communication practice, research, and/ or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I guess that it depends very much on the time frame you are considering. I started out translating with a portable Olivetti typewriter, and with two printed dictionaries.

Anything else would entail writing it down and going elsewhere, to a library, to search and retrieve information you needed. Computers and the Internet have turned the jobs of professional translators upside down. Freelance translators are the epitome of teleworkers and one of the best examples of the adaptation to the new economy.

There is no such a thing as computer-assisted translation because there is no such thing as translating—professional translating—without computers. We actually are so technological that we keep telling each other about applications, programs and possibilities that sprung up just three months ago, say, in India. We are, actually, very busy, and keeping up to date and keeping up to date with the pace of the market and the new possibilities that translation and communication technologies are offering us. And our profession is changing, not before and after computing, but before any single generation of computing power. I mean, the way the translation kits were used in 80s to translate video games has nothing to with the way they are translated now. You know, localization now has nothing to do with localization in the 90s.

In my area of research, using computers has helped us register the behavior of translators. So, it has made it possible to study, not only the products—the texts—but also the process of reading, writing, and translating. So, computers have made it possible to have a look at the black box. And, now, computer power can also be applied to study texts in ways we could only dream of some years ago. Corpus approaches to textual analysis make it clear, for instance, what the tendencies are in, say, text types. How text types are changing over decades, for instance, is something that you can learn now, and it was nearly impossible to trace ten years ago.

What kinds of international and intercultural experiences and skill sets has higher education taught students to help them transition to industry? In what ways could higher education do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

It depends very much on the higher education institution someone is attending. In places where the faculty has embraced professional approaches, then translator training, which is what I know of, tries to imitate professional and market environments. So the

gap is not so wide, and therefore, the transition into the market is not so stressing, nor so difficult for the students.

We still need to remap the disciplines, and acknowledge the increasing importance of communication studies. And communication has not been considered a crucial skill in the university until 10 years ago—not, I don't mean now, in communication studies, but anywhere else. You're calling from the States, and in the States you've got these writing programs and writing courses in support in most degrees. But we don't, in many places in Europe and elsewhere in the world, and that's something that we need.

And higher education could do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates by showing them that the communication skills they learn are to be applied within their community, but may be wrong or different in different communities. We have all learned that when a Japanese businessman gives us their visiting card, we should take it with both hands, and we shouldn't put it in our pocket right away. We should do that, not only with the Japanese, we should know these things, not only with the Japanese, but with practically any culture we need to be in contact with.

What kinds of skills are you teaching and what types of skills you would also like to teach?

Yes, we train our students in foreign languages and in their own language, as well, which is even more important. We train them in communication and information technologies and in protocol, sometimes. We train them in basic knowledge of specialized domains that they will need to understand. And we push them to learn about the culture and the expectations of the people they will be writing for. That's basically what a translator should know. As you can see, there is very little difference with the way you might describe a technical writer or a professional communicator, in general.

How do you handle visuals—the visual component of documents—when translating and preparing translators? How do translators deal with this?

It's a very good question, because there are two main ways of approaching that, depending on whether you are working for an intermediary or for the final client and reader. If they are going to use the document the way you hand it to them, then they

really need to do a very good job in markup and graphic design. And they need to make sure of the quality of the image. They need to make sure that texts and images go well together; that the images will mean the same where they are going to be read in the translation—or whether some of them should be changed or improved.

Whereas, when they work for an intermediary and someone else would do that job, then translators need to be trained to communicate with that specialist, and make sure they enter all the instructions as information—usually between square brackets—so that this person will be able to work on the document without knowing the language they are working with.

How widespread is the awareness that translators and professors of translation need to dedicate some time to this?

There have been some researchers working on this topic, like Paul Kussmaul in the 90s and Isabel Tercedor, from the University of Granada, later on. It is not a very popular topic, because most people tend to go with a wave and think that we deal with words and just words, and not with communicative artifacts that compound many different communication strategies and possibilities.

What has industry done well to help higher education teach international and intercultural experiences and skill sets, or to help their own employees develop such experiences and skill sets? What else might industry do to help prepare the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

I think the answer is very different if you are considering big companies and small companies. There are some sectors where companies really know that they need international professional communication, and they will go one extra step to help the university, through practicums and apprenticeships. There is the banking sector. There is, of course, the localization sector, the film industry, but also big companies such as Coca-Cola, and the computer companies, where you can be sure that they know that it is crucial for them to communicate properly and successfully in many different languages. As I said before, in smaller companies, it is not so clear. Many entrepreneurs

still think that trainees are a nuisance, or else see them as bothersome at the beginning, and sometimes even as cheap labor by the end of their training periods. Supervision needs to improve both on the company side and on the university side.

I think that the university should convince authorities to create programs to train companies, especially small companies, in this area. I mean, when companies realize how much they can improve, they usually change their minds swiftly. In fact, many people who are trainees or do an apprenticeship in a certain company end up working there, getting a full time job there, which means that, once they realize that they can improve, they will embrace the notion. But, still there are many others who don't know, and, you know, I am in the Canary Islands, in Spain, and I can tell that the tourist industry is not aware of the need of having very good international communication. Only very big companies, even in the tourist sector, are aware of the need of very good international professional communication. ■

About the Interviewee

Ricardo Muñoz Martín has been a freelance translator since 1987 and is currently professor of translation at the School of Translation & Interpreting at University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Muñoz Martín also coordinates the Expertise and Environment in Translation (PETRA [Spanish acronym]: www.cogtrans.net) research team's efforts to develop a cognitive translatology.

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connexions interview with

ANNE SURMA

Transcript of the interview with Anne Surma, a senior lecturer in English and Professional Writing in the School of Arts, at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia. Anne has also worked as an editor and writing consultant in the commercial sector.

The interview was recorded for issue 2(1). It was conducted by Kyle Mattson, via Skype, on November 17, 2014, and transcribed from the recorded interview by Quan Zhou, *connexions*' section editor.

The video recording of this interview is available on the *connexions* Vimeo channel at https://vimeo.com/115346025

Can you describe your present career in light of international professional communication?

I guess the question's a little bit daunting. I suppose I don't think of myself as… I don't use that label typically, though, of course, much of what I do revolves around the idea of international professional communication. So, I'm an academic in a university in Western Australia, in Perth. I work in the English and Creative Arts program. I'm the chair of that program. This is a program that teaches literature, creative writing, professional writing, and theater and drama. I've been here for a number of years working in a teaching capacity, as well as a researcher. I guess, although I have done some extensive teaching in the field of professional writing, for instance, and in the area
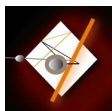
of critical public relations, it's more in my research that I really have the opportunity to explore professional communication, and writing, in particular, in the international and, in fact, the global realm—which is, you know, an area of my particular interest, as my latest book kind of demonstrates.

I suppose I should also say, though—and this is by means of kind of contextualizing my position in the field, because, of course, communication is a very broad field and, in some ways, a highly contested field—my background is in literary studies, so I come to the field with a very keen interest in language and text, rather than in the broader questions, I guess, of communications. So I'm very interested in communication in context, communication as textual, social practice. And, I guess, that drives a lot of the work that I do in my present role, here, at the university, as a teacher and as a researcher, as well.

What previous experience in international professional communication, if any, has prepared you for your present career?

I, actually, realize that I love this question, because it made me think about all kinds of things in my life, and... I'll suggest, I suppose, a few strands that have probably influenced my place now, and how I've got here. First of all, I come from a family, a blended-cultural family. I'm originally from the UK, but my parents are mid-Europeans, so I grew up in a household where communication across culture was really important—and I don't just mean in the kind of broad sense. I mean in the sense of understanding the ways in which different people see the world, understand the world, communicate their worlds with one another—that was the kind of the world I grew up in. So, from the outset, communication was something that was... a problem, in the richest possible sense that I could use that term, for me.

I had one of my first significant professional jobs working for the international cultural and educational organization, the British Council, in London, in the late 18... 1980s, and I worked there in their design and publishing department as a production editor. So, I was working on panel exhibitions, on international newsletters, on literature magazines, on a whole host of publications where the ways in which we connected with our readership—and they were a diverse readership, across the globe—was absolutely crucial. And I think I really developed, not only technical skills in communication,

but a real sense of the kind of practical, ethical, social dimensions and qualities of communicating in a global context, from that experience.

And, then, of course, I migrated to Australia in the early 1990s, so I had this very naive idea that, when I arrived here, because so many people spoke English, that we'd all understand each other. But I had probably never found myself in such a foreign place. And it really took a number of years to learn that culture is not just about speaking different languages. It's a whole set of practices and behaviors and attitudes that all have an impact on the ways in which we connect with, and relate to, and communicate with others. So, all those things have been really significant in informing the place I now have come to, in relation to international professional communication.

What would you say are particular accomplishments of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I guess, you know, the kind of quick or glib answer might be advances in technology. But I just... that's probably a very lazy answer, and it probably doesn't address some of the other key things that are going on. I think—and I think we may talk about technology later, so I'll, perhaps, leave that to one side—and say that I think, perhaps one of the key accomplishments, as far as I'm concerned as a researcher and as a erstwhile practitioner, is that we've had the opportunity and the benefit of working in an interdisciplinary way, in our field, so that we understand that, when we communicate, we are not working in isolation. We are necessarily... involving, and becoming involved in, a range of disciplines, in order to explore our field in more detail, more meaningfully and more productively. And I think, for me, some of the exciting things about research that have emerged, say in Australia, but, perhaps, more particularly internationally, have been the ways in which a range of disciplines have become significant in helping us understand our field. So for me, in particular, perhaps, the field of philosophy generally, but ethics, in particular, political theory, sociology, history, all of these, I think, are absolutely pivotal to helping us navigate our way as we explore this, this extremely broad field that we occupy.

What would you say are some challenges of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I think there are particular challenges, and I think the challenges are symptomatic, quite obviously, of the kind of world we live in. I think there is a great risk that we treat communication as an instrument... or as an intrumentalist kind of *object*, if you like, that we treat it in ways that don't understand, or that bypass, the ways in which communication is, essentially, about our relationships with other people. I worry that the instrumentalist approach to communication can elide, or obscure, or even leave out altogether from the picture the fact that communicating is about connecting with others, it's about our social relations with others.

And, I think, while technology can do wonderful things to enable certain forms of connections, certain means of connection with others, there is a risk that, with many of our technologies, that we actually forget the human dimension. And I think that, working in the field of communication, this is a real challenge for us—that communication not be understood, primarily, as a commercial enterprise; that it be understood, rather, as I've mentioned, as social, ethical... relational activity.

I do worry about the commercial and instrumentalist dimension. And, I think, we need to be vigilant about that, and critical of it, at every turn. And, certainly, as a teacher and as a supervisor of many PhD students, I am always at pains to urge my students to think about these things, to think about what it means to communicate, other than to communicate for one's own profit or benefit—that there must be some other purpose to this thing that we... that helps keep us alive.

How do you see technology or changes in technology impacting, maintaining, or altering international professional communication practice, research, and/ or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Technology has the potential to, and has already, indeed, made significant changes, or helped us change, in fact, the way that we think about communication, the way that we do communicate with one another, both locally and globally—and some of the changes have been just mind blowing. I think we continue to be amazed by the reach,

the speed, and the immediacy of our communication, with the various technologies that we have at our disposal—and I'm using a first person plural, here, talking in the *we*, but, of course, we always do need to remember that technology and its advances are not... a privilege enjoyed by everyone across the world. And so, issues of power become particularly important here as we think about who has access to what technology, and in what ways might that technology be deployed by various individuals or institutions across the world. So I think we need to think about the ways in which, yeah, sure technology is changing the way we communication, but we need to think about who has particular access to certain kinds of technologies, and what kinds of reach do those individuals or institutions have in their use of technology.

I think, you know, we also need to remember that technology is not inherently good, or inherently bad. It's the way in which it's used in particular contexts that will determine... how it means, what it means, and to what ends we might use it. I do think that those very advantages that I spoke of, in terms of reach, speed, and immediacy, should alert us to some of the potential drawbacks of technology. I think there is the risk that we may not be communicating with care. And I use the term *care* very particularly, here, and very specifically—and I write about this in the research that I do—and I'm interested in care as, not only in its most obvious sense, here, in terms of doing something with deliberation and a self-conscious kind of approach, but I'm talking about care in its broader sense, in terms of the interdependent relations that we share with others, that we are born as interdependent beings, and we owe an obligation to one another to care for them.

I'm coming to this argument in a very short-hand way, and so I don't have time to go into detail, here, but what I would suggest is that, when we use technology, we should be using it with care. And I mean, by that, that we need to think about the kinds of relations and relationships that technology enables us to set up with others. Or the kinds of relationships from which we might be disabled by our use of technology. That we should be thinking, again, primarily, of the ways in which our responsibilities to, or obligations towards others are facilitated by technology, and the ways in which those might be inhibited or precluded.

What kinds of international and intercultural experiences and skill sets has higher education taught students to help them transition to industry? In what ways could higher education do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

I think that's a really interesting question, Kyle, and it's a very timely one in the Australian context, where there is a... I think you could, probably, safely say... a battle raging at the moment about the purpose and the aims of higher education, and its role in society, and the degree to which the university, for instance, should serve as... some kind of production factory for industry. And there is a lot of conflict and debate and tension around this question.

From a personal and professional point of view, as a scholar working in the field, I do see the value of the kinds of links that we might forge with industry, with our students, through, for example, work placement, internships, and so on, that offer them the on-the-ground pragmatic, practical experience that will equip them with the kinds of skills that they will need later when they go into industry. So I do fully support that endeavor, those kinds of initiatives.

I do think we do need to be really careful though. There seems to me to be, perhaps an overenthusiasm to ensure that our students are industry-ready as soon as they leave the university. And I see a different role for universities. It may sound rather regressive these days, but, for me, you know, the time that students spend in a university is a really special time to step back, to reflect, to be self-reflexive about the activities, the practices, the environments, and the ideologies with which the world in which they live is engaged, and the professional worlds into which they will move are… embedded in. I think the university is the best place for us to stop and think about those questions, very critically. And when I say critically, I'm using the term to suggest, not in a kind of destructive kind of way, but to think critically about these things is to ask questions about them, to check that the ways in which particular industries—communication industries, for instance—are operating are ways in which we feel is contributing to the kind of society that we want to build, that we want to be part of, that we want to contribute to, as professionals.

So, I guess I'm always a little bit wary about, perhaps, what I see is the overenthusiasm on some people's part, to make our students industry ready, because

I feel that, while, of course, the kinds of relationships that the university and the community and industry might have are extremely valuable, I think we need to maintain the distinction between them, and understand that universities are places of learning, and critical-reflective learning is at the heart of the education enterprise, as far as I'm concerned.

What has industry done well to help higher education teach international and intercultural experiences and skill sets, or to help their own employees develop such experiences and skill sets? What else might industry do to help prepare the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

In one part of the answer to this question, I can probably only speak in quite broad terms. I mean, I do think, certainly in the Australian context, that we see that industry—and I'm using the term very broadly here, to mean all kinds of industry for whom communications is important, and that's about just every industry—I do see that industry is very interested in ensuring that their employees have opportunities to undertake ongoing professional development to hone their communicating skills, their capacity to communicate in a range of contexts, and so on. And in the Australian context, there are fairly good relationships set up, in some sectors at least, between industry and the university—the university sometimes providing those kinds of professional development opportunities to industry.

I do worry though, again, because I have a particularly strong sense that we should never think of communication as some of kind of skill separable from everything else we do in our workplace lives, as well as in the rest of our lives, so that the risk of, let's say, sending employees to a workshop, or a training course, is that the kinds of communication in which they may be immersed for that one day, or those two days, or whatever it is, may be seen separately from the work they, then, go back to do, on a day-to-day basis. Obviously, there are some wonderful professional development courses that offer employees the opportunity to draw on their own work practices in order to be able to refine their skills in communicating. But I think, too often, it's a question of going to a workshop, having a workbook, going through a whole set of exercises and then coming back to work and carrying on as if nothing has changed. I'm being rather

glib, here, because... but, of course, I'm simply trying to make a point, and I'm not trying to denigrate the value of certain kinds of professional development.

But, I guess the point I'm getting to is that I think, more and more, there are some really exciting learning and teaching practices. And I don't know how widespread they are in the States, but they're an emerging phenomenon, here. The idea that, actually, researchers and professionals could come together, and are coming together more often, to work together on the ways in which communication happens *in situ*. So, just to be clear about this, the kinds of research I'm talking about are, not simply—although this would be part of it—the kind of ethnographic approach where the researcher will go into industry, but there are really some exciting practices going on, and, in fact, I'm hoping to be involved in a large project, next year, where we actually enact some of these practices... going into the workplace, and carrying out video ethnography. So, for instance, filming professionals at work. So, researchers going into a workplace, filming professionals at work and, then, with those professionals, sitting down and reviewing those videos and, together, researchers and professionals interrogating, analyzing, reflecting on... their practices, using the opportunity of communication as it happens *in situ* to learn about our practices as communicators.

And I think that helps us to overcome that risk of treating any kind of professional development in communication as something separate from what we do on a day-to-day basis. And some results of this kind of work, and I've been... most of the work I've been reading about where this has been going on with brilliant results has been in the hospital sector... so, in care settings, whether it's communication between physicians and patients, or between physicians and other health professionals... filming those exchanges, those interactions, and then, with those professionals, researchers reflecting on, and the professionals, in particular, reflecting on, and learning from the ways in which they communicate, to talk about ways in which they may do this differently, better—the kinds of things that you miss when you're doing things habitually. We communicate all the time. It's part of who we are. It's part of what we do. When we do this as professionals, we habituate ourselves to certain kinds of practices. And this form of video ethnography, this reflexive video ethnography, gives us the opportunity, again, to step back, and to look at ourselves, listen to ourselves, watch ourselves in action, and think about ways in which we, perhaps, are excluding others, talking over others, not

paying attention to the words of others, in the ways in which we engage with them. So I think those kinds of relationships between industry and higher education, the higher education sector are potentially very, very exciting.

I mean, I think you could take this kind of video-reflexive ethnography into all kinds of contexts that would be really exciting, and really offer some eye-opening opportunities that... from which, not only those involved could learn, but we could, then, be using those—obviously with the permission of those involved—but using those videos to teach, and to learn about the ways in which, *in situ*, we engage in communication across... across cultures, across workplaces, across professions. There are a whole, there are a myriad of ways in which I think this kind of approach might be deployed. ■

About the Interviewee

Anne Surma an academic chair of and a senior lecturer in the English and Creative Arts program. She supervises several postgraduate students working on topics ranging from creative writing to representations of cultural identity. She has also worked in private industry as an editor and writer, and as a workshop facilitator and consultant, advising on communication strategy and practice. Her research interests include cosmopolitan orientations to communicating; public communication as ethical discourse and creative practice; corporate responsibility; and discursive approaches to dominant and marginalized narratives in public and organizational stories.

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connexions interview with

KIM YANGSOOK

Transcript of the interview with Kim Yangsook, from the Republic of Korea. Kim Yangsook is president and owner of HansemEUG, Inc. She is also president of the Korea Technical Communicators Association.

This interview was recorded for issue 2(1). It was conducted by Quan Zhou, via Skype, on December 4, 2014.

The video recording of this interview is available on the *connexions* Vimeo channel at https://vimeo.com/115741816

Can you describe your present career in light of international professional communication?

I am the owner and CEO of HansemEUG. My company develops user manuals for consumer electronic products, such as smartphones, tablet, digital camera, and printer, and so on. And localize the content into multiple languages—more than 40 languages.

I founded my company in 1990 with just only one assistant. Now, I employ more than 170 staff, and we are the biggest company in this field in Korea. I am also the president of KTCA, or the Korea Technical Communication Association, the most representative organization in this field in Korea. KTCA is a nonprofit, and we support
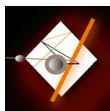
workers in this field to improve their expertise, and to improve the social awareness of this industry.

What previous experience in international professional communication, if any, has prepared you for your present career?

I studied English in university. I started working as a technical writer for an American manufacturer of digital electronic products. My job is to write contents for user manuals in English. So, my university and career background allowed me start this business—my business.

What would you say are particular accomplishments of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I think the biggest accomplishment of the technical communication field in Korea is the rapid growth within a very short period, from scratch. In general, technical communication industry grows with the manufacturing industry. You know, to sell the products, manuals should accompany the products. When I first started my career about 30 years ago, the manufacturing industry in Korea was only at a development stage and the TC industry nearly did not exist. So, I had to learn everything from scratch and from hands-on experience. But, as our manufacturing industry has developed very fast within the last few decades, our TC industry has also developed very fast, together with the manufacturing industry. I believe this growth is very unique, because unlike the manufacturing industry, the Korea TC industry grew fast, without any support from government or any other source, such as the universities or institutions. I think this is the biggest accomplishment of Korea's TC industry so far.

What would you say are some challenges of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I think there are two main challenges to the TC industry in Korea. One is that our technical writers need to write manuals in English if the products are targeted to

overseas market to make the manual to be used a source text for localization. The most, you know, the most common language to be used as a source text for multiple language and localization is English. But, unlike other languages, other European languages, or Latin languages, Korean language has a really different, totally different language structure and grammar from English. So, if you translate Korean to English to make it as a source text for multiple language localization, the quality of the source text cannot be guaranteed. As a result, the quality of a multiple languages translation from it suffers. To solve this problem, most Korean technical writers write the source text in English from the beginning. But, you know, as non-native speakers, it is always a challenge for the Korean writers to write quality English manuals.

Another challenge is that it is really hard to discover young applicants who can write in English very well. You know, it is very difficult to find people who can write well in English, and it is even more difficult to find people with good English skills who want to enter this industry. Why? Because the TC industry in Korea is relatively new and not very developed in Korea, so the social awareness for the profession and expertise is very low—not high. It is a challenge for us to discover and attract those young qualified people into our industry. These are many challenges to this industry.

How do you see technology or changes in technology impacting, maintaining, or altering international professional communication practice, research, and/ or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Generally speaking, the TC industry is really sensitive to changes in technology. If the technology changes how users get information, we also need to change how we develop, how we present instruction for use. The technology changes our working environment, too. We make use of up-to-date tools and systems, including authoring tools, editing tools, content management system, translation memory system, project management systems, and so on. Recently, the most significant trend for our industry is a transition from print manuals to mobile-oriented manuals. We need to develop contents that we can use on both papers and mobile devices. So, file format conversion technology, such as single source, multiple publishing solution, has become very important in our

industry, these days. It is really important that our industry always keeps pace with the new technology.

What kinds of international and intercultural experiences and skill sets has higher education taught students to help them transition to industry? In what ways could higher education do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

Unfortunately, in my country, there is almost no university curriculum for technical communication. I think there is a lot to teach at universities for the newcomers to this industry, such as professional writing, international standards, usability, localization, and useful tools—many things. It is unfortunate for our industry—for our local industry—that these basic skills cannot be learned at the university level. I know there are few technical writing course in Korea for engineering students, but no proper bachelor or master's program is offered yet. But, recently, I can sense some change and positive movement from schools, but still, we have too few educational programs for our industry in Korea.

What has industry done well to help higher education teach international and intercultural experiences and skill sets, or to help their own employees develop such experiences and skill sets? What else might industry do to help prepare the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

As I explained before, because there is no support from universities or government, here in Korea, it is up to the industry or individual companies to train our own employees from the beginning. We train them on the job. We teach them how to use necessary tools, and let them experience the information development cycle in the working field. After that, we support them to learn more professional knowledge, such as international standards and regulations for manuals, risk assessment, user research, usability, new technology, and so on.

As a president of KTCA, I try my best to support the TC industry in Korea to grow. We train TC professionals and encourage them to share knowledge. Recently, we

also cooperate with universities to help them develop proper academic programs for technical communications. ■

About the Interviewee

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