Technical Communicators: Where we’ve been  Where we’re going

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#stc19

Denver  
May 8, 2019
1. Where we've been
   A very brief history of tech comm and STC

2. What has not changed
   What tech comm is all about

3. Where we're going
   Some thoughts about future trends

4. Discussion and questions
Where we've been
A very brief history of tech comm and STC

Timelines
Photo from replica of Lascaux, France
Photo by Mike Beauregard, 2017, Creative Commons License 2.0
1 The creation of Heauen and Earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitfull, 14 of the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, 20 of fish and fowle, 24 of beasts and cattell, 26 of Man in the Image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.

1 In the beginning God created the Heauen, and the Earth.¹

2 And the earth was without forme, and voyd, and darkenesse was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God mooued vpon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.³

4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God diuided the light from the darkenesse.⁴
1953  Society of Technical Writers

1953  Association of Technical Writers and Editors

1957  Society of Technical Writers and Editors (STWE)

1960  + Technical Publishing Society

1971  Society for Technical Communication

https://www.stc.org/about-stc
Board meeting at the 4th TWE conference (1956)
Source: STC archives
the official journal
of the technical
publishing society

a unique magazine
for members of a
big and important
new field

Source: STC archives
1958 – Erwin Steinberg started teaching technical writing at Margaret Morrison Carnegie College for Women.

From an article in the *Pittsburgh Press*, Oct. 3, 1958
Thanks to Janis Geisler Ramey for sharing the article with me.
Ad from the first issue of *technical communications*
Source: STC archives
Technical communicators started to create user-oriented, task-oriented manuals

IBM PROFS ~1983

HP VECTRA ~1984

Products from the Document Design Center, American Institutes for Research
STC Board of Directors meeting – mid 1990s
Source: STC archives
Carnegie Mellon Master of Arts In Professional Writing students in 2013
http://www.cmu.edu/hss/english/graduate/ma-pw/index.html

A recent Summit session

Photo from the STC Summit 2019 website
For more history

RPI – and the early history
Merrill Whitburn
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1050651909338801

CMU – a retrospective about Erwin Steinberg
Ginny Redish
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cq0oPwABGw&t=107s

Plain Language in the US Gains Momentum: 1940-2015
Karen Schriver
https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8115322
What has not changed
What tech comm is all about
T C has always been user-centered

Sergey Gladkiy
June 14, 2018
https://uxplanet.org/user-centered-design-process-and-benefits-fd9e431eb5a9
Good T C is both useful and usable

If we do our job well, the people who must (or should) use what we write can

- **find** what they need,
- **understand** what they find, and
- **act** appropriately on that understanding
  (**use** what they find to meet their needs)

in the time and effort that they are willing to spend.

[https://www.plainlanguage.gov](https://www.plainlanguage.gov)
Everything we write is part of a conversation

Content as Conversation

Thinking of content as a two-way conversation with users for better, friendlier interactions.

Article No :823 | May 3, 2012 | by Ginny Redish

https://uxmag.com/articles/content-as-conversation
Asynchronous

conversation is the contribution of professional technical communicators

Issuance of a TOP command results in a line zero condition.

To go to the beginning of your file, type TOP and press Enter.
Ready to **transform** your career?

There's one clear choice.

Join STC today.

- High Quality Education
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- Professional Certification

https://www.stc.org
You have been inactive for over an hour.
I was bored, so I decided to take a nap. Let me know when you get back.
Get started with a free account

Find your people. Engage your customers. Build your brand. Do it all with Mailchimp's marketing tools. Already have an account? Log in

Email

Username

Password

By clicking the "Get Started!" button, you are creating a Mailchimp account, and you agree to Mailchimp's Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

https://login.mailchimp.com/signup
## Add basic page numbering

**Common page numbering tasks**

InDesign offers several different features that help you create page numbering effects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To do this:</th>
<th>Do this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add section numbers and chapter numbers.</td>
<td>See <a href="https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/using/layout-design-9.html">Add section and chapter numbering.</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create running headers or running footers that use text variables such as the create date, filename, or the current heading or title.</td>
<td>See <a href="https://helpx.adobe.com/indesign/using/layout-design-9.html">Create headers and footers and Text variables.</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Numbering pages, chapters, and sections

Add an automatically updated section marker

1. Define sections in your document. (See Define section numbering.)

2. On a page or master that you're using in a section, drag the Type tool to create a text frame large enough for the section marker text, or click in an existing frame.

3. Choose Type > Insert Special Character > Markers > Section Marker.

https://helpx.adobe.com/inDesign/using/numbering-pages-chapters-sections.html#add_section_and_chapter_numbering
T C pays attention to information design

Instructions for printing from a typical 1980s manual

NOT by a technical communicator
What's your move?

You know you need physical activity to stay healthy. But did you know it can help you feel better right away?

- Boost your mood
- Sharpen your focus
- Reduce your stress
- Improve your sleep

So get more active — and start feeling better today.

How much activity do I need?

**Moderate-intensity aerobic activity**
Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.

- At least 150 minutes a week

**Muscle-strengthening activity**
Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.

- At least 2 days a week

Tight on time this week? Start with just 5 minutes. It all adds up!

[https://health.gov/paguidelines/moveyourway/#factsheets](https://health.gov/paguidelines/moveyourway/#factsheets)

from CommunicateHealth
[https://communicatehealth.com/](https://communicatehealth.com/)
T C is many specialties, many domains

Academic
Accessibility
Agile
Application Program Interface
Consulting & Independent Contracting
Health & Medicine
Instructional Design & Learning
Lone Writer
Policies & Procedures
Technical Editing
Usability & User Experience
Women in TechComm
Where we're going
Some thoughts about future trends
So where are we going?

Job Outlook

Employment of technical writers is projected to grow 11 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations.

https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm#tab-6
Our tools will keep changing
The space we have for our content may keep getting smaller?
We may write for more and different media
Our focus may get both more global – and more local for different users
Our roles may expand

Content Strategy

User Experience

Customer Experience
Discussion and questions

What do you see in your future – and our future as a profession?
Thank you!

Janice (Ginny) Redish, Ph.D.
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More questions?
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Morgan Kaufmann / Elsevier
2nd edition