Book Review

Yvonne Cleary

The Profession and Practice of Technical Communication

—Reviewed by
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Index Terms*—*Pedagogy, practice, research, teaching.

In *The Profession and Practice of Technical Communication,* Yvonne Cleary provides an up-to-date, research-based, but practical and accessible description of contemporary technical communication practice in a global environment. This book gives readers a thorough understanding of the technical communication field by emphasizing how it should be viewed as a profession, how one might pursue a career in it, and finally how to practice it. Finally, the book draws the reader's attention to background material with a succinct summary of ideas that have been popularized in both literature and practice. In addition, the book's extensive multiple method study methodology provides a solid justification for the information's foundation.

This book has nine chapters that are divided into the following three sections.

- The first section introduces the fundamentals of technical communication as a profession. It also discusses the various education and training options available to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as the support provided by various communities for enhancing professional connections and growth.
- The second section examines how diverse the technical communication profession is—for instance, by examining the many competencies required, various sorts of activities that are performed, and various work environment options accessible, including working from home. This part also emphasizes the changes that the COVID pandemic has brought about and predicts what adjustments will be required in terms of the necessary skills in the future.
- The third section introduces the theories and procedures that serve as the book's foundation and link the first two sections to a research framework. In addition to giving the theoretical underpinnings, this part also makes a deeper connection between the information that has been shared in the previous sections and the author's research methodology. This approach improves the audience's perception of the book's overall validity and reliability.

Chapter 1 provides background information on technical communication as a profession. The goal of technical communication is to easily and clearly communicate technical knowledge to its users; hence, a user-centric approach is crucial. Technical communication has a strong theoretical and research foundation, and relevant periodicals that disseminate the research in this area are effectively described. Finally, job titles connected to some of the subdisciplines of technical communication are offered. Technical communicators, for instance, work alongside software engineers to translate technical software knowledge into user manuals for nontechnical users.

Chapter 2 addresses education and training for technical communicators. Technical communication is often a second career for professionals who originally trained in other fields. However, technical communication is increasingly seen as a first career today, and education is more widely available through universities, with degrees ranging from two-year certificates to doctorates. The chapter provides information on available technical communication certification models, such as those provided by the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and Tekom Europe. The

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number of certification levels offered by these two organizations varies; for example, the STC model offers three: foundation, practitioner, and expert. Finally, the chapter disseminates information about two projects that equip technical communicators with education and training possibilities, the TecCOMFrame project, financed by the European Union, and the STC-supported Technical Communication Body of Knowledge.

Chapter 3 introduces the many technical communities that are available. These groups of people form social networks that connect individuals with a similar interest in technical communication. By joining these groups, one can develop closer professional ties with other professionals, fostering knowledge sharing, education, and skill development. This chapter examines a variety of communities, including workplace, academic, and online, as well as professional associations. Social networking technologies support online communities' capacity to create, sustain, and enhance their communities. Also, professionals often gain knowledge from peers at work—for example, by studying others' practices or posing questions.

Chapter 4 examines the many abilities and skills needed to be an effective technical communicator. The tasks related to content creation include writing, research, information and visual design, management, and the application of domain knowledge. Technical communicators must constantly learn new skills and incorporate them into their daily work. User manuals and video material are just a couple of the several artifacts that technical communicators are asked to develop. At the end of the chapter, genres—including procedural, report, and presentation writing—are discussed.

Chapter 5 covers the technical communication workplace. This subject is crucial because workplace culture affects the quality of professional work. A good workplace, for instance, enables professionals to learn from their colleagues and hone their content writing talents. Work from home is one of the many possibilities for workplaces, and that has been particularly so during the pandemic. Flexibility, variety, and fair salary and benefits tend to have a good impact on job satisfaction for technical communicators.

Chapter 6 forecasts the future of technical communication. For instance, technological advancements have altered how technical communicators create content by using technology for writing, research, information and visual design, administrative tasks, and domain expertise. As a result, they have had to adapt new technologies and acquire the necessary knowledge and abilities to operate them. Industry 4.0, Information 4.0, technological advancements, and our reactions to those changes will all have an impact on the future of the technical communication profession. Single sourcing and structured content models, the trend toward personalization and presentation of microcontent, and the increased demand for developer documentation will all have an impact on practice in the future.

Chapter 7 explains the theories and methods that form the basis of the book, along with how they apply to technical communication research and the concepts of professionalization and practice.

Chapter 8 connects the first two sections to a research framework. This section draws a closer relationship between the data dispersed over the earlier sections and the author's research methodology. Planning, data gathering, analysis, and reporting were all part of this research methodology. Situation analysis was also part of the planning process, leading to the creation of situational maps. These maps made it possible for the researcher to examine the research scenario and map it as precisely as possible. Data from literature studies, surveys of technical communicators, and content analysis were collected for the study. The survey results were expanded by the analysis of online data (secondary research), such as blogs, websites, magazines, and webinars. Although some quantitative data are included, the investigation was primarily qualitative. To examine the quantitative and qualitative data, respectively, descriptive statistics and grounded theory were employed. This book shares the results of Cleary's research project.

Cleary presents next directions in technological communication in Chapter 9. This book recommends three strategies to further enhance this profession: strengthening professional identity, research in an international context, and practice- and practitioner-focused research. Strengthening professional identify entails maintaining the clarity of technical communicators' professional identity. Research in an international setting requires that study of technical communication must use data from all around the world rather than just one continent, such as North America. This is really important because internationally based

research will help this profession become truly global. Practice- and practitioner-focused research bridge the gaps between academic research and practice. In other words, both academic research and practice-based research are important and should be valued, and ought to be mutually beneficial.

This book is accessible and useful for industry practitioners, students, and teachers. The book also helps novices by giving them all the knowledge they need about the subject, educational options, societies, technologies, necessary skills, workplaces, and the need to adapt quickly to changing conditions to meet future needs. Real-world case studies and the sharing of technical communicators' real experiences are of tremendous value to professionals and will aid in the development of their technical communication skills.