

Book Review

Sean D. Williams, Ed.

Technical Communication for Environmental Action

—Reviewed by

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Index Terms—Climate change, community-engaged technical communication, environmental action, indigenous narratives.

In *Technical Communication for Environmental Action*, editor Sean D. Williams provides a compilation of scholarly chapters that discuss the urgent necessity for creating efficient communication strategies to address environmental challenges, particularly climate change. In this book, technical communication can be seen as a relevant framework condition for the successful fight against climate change, providing information that can be understood by the majority of society and then implemented by business, industry, and governments.

The book's 11 chapters, each written by different authors, cover a wide range of aspects, from environmental rhetoric to actual industrial use cases. The book is an essential resource for anybody interested in the complicated issues of environmental conservation in an increasingly digital world. In particular, this book is well-suited for technical communicators who want to better understand the implications of acting on the examples of others. In other words, it is appropriate for those who want to realize the significance of their own activities and repercussions to come.

The book is written with both academics and practitioners in mind, and is a thorough handbook for those working in industries including

environmental sciences, engineering, politics, and communication because of the variety of themes covered.

Case studies, theoretical analyses, and practical recommendations are all included, giving readers not just in-depth knowledge of the subject matter but also useful practical tools. The book's timeliness is yet another noteworthy feature. It provides much-needed insights and remedies at a time when the consequences of climate change and other environmental challenges are becoming more and more obvious. It helps to close the communication gap between society and science by encouraging discussion among many stakeholders, including policymakers.

The book chapters explore different facets of technical communication in the context of environmental action. The book's first chapters look at traditional Indigenous stories about the natural world and how they might be used to communicate climate information. Contributing authors investigate how they can provide a wealth of knowledge and add to the larger scientific conversation on climate change.

Later chapters cover environmental decision-making. Designing ethical and effective decision-making procedures necessitates careful consideration of the unique local aspects of environmental issues, making sure that the appropriate stakeholders are involved in meaningful discourse and possess the necessary knowledge and provide all relevant viewpoints.

The book's final section is devoted to community involvement and education. It addresses how practical, hands-on experiences in technical communication can help students and community

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people find their agency. By demonstrating concrete local implications, promoting agencies, and inspiring students to take on bigger global concerns, community-engaged technical communication equips students to take on active roles as agents of positive environmental change.

Technical communicators can address significant environmental issues through seemingly routine tasks. In Chapter 4, for instance, Daniel P. Richards discusses his experience of developing an online tool to determine insurance premiums to encourage inhabitants of flood-prone areas to get insurance, highlighting the difficulties of presenting complex data in a form the audience can understand and use to inform action. In addition, it emphasizes the transformative power of partnerships to build participatory action-oriented teaching that redefines roles and encourages environmental action through cooperative, respectful relationships, going beyond typical service-learning. Such collaborations, founded on mutual respect and shared ideals, can spark environmental action by building long-lasting relationships that go beyond conventional educational roles. It also introduces the idea of “societal teleconnections,” which refers to the connectivity of seemingly remote regions and the worldwide implications of local decisions. It is crucial to consider how local decisions may affect the environment globally. To promote environmental action and solve interconnected concerns across regions, it is important to include local narratives in policy talks. Technical communication strategies can also empower communities.

Later chapters delve further into more specialized subjects including the dangers to human health in shale fields, the importance of technical communication for farming resilience, and the formulation of policies for shared water resources. These chapters give readers a more in-depth understanding of how to adjust technical communication for very specific environmental challenges and target groups. For instance, in Chapter 7, Sara B. Parks and Lee S. Tesdell use examples to give the reader a very good impression of the challenges of technical communication, especially the example of the Des Moines Water Works case. This case clearly explains and illustrates the facts for the reader, which is very helpful for understanding. In sum, the authors vividly illustrate the consequences of miscommunication and identify those who can counteract this problem:

We technical writers, teachers of technical communication, science journalists, and conservation advocates have a critical task in front of us. (p. 214)

In this respect, the authors not only point out problems but also contribute to solving them.

Technical communication may educate decision makers on the effects of climate change and technological advancements in the US agricultural sector, highlighting the importance of context awareness and the use of specialized communication techniques for successful environmental action. An effective basis for significant environmental action can be motivated in the technical communication classroom by encouraging students to actively engage in meaningful environmental writing and effect change by integrating their understanding of resource usage with their campus experiences. Authors emphasize the relationship between environmental and procedural justice, and critique the communication regarding the dangers of fracking for underrepresented communities. Further emphasis is placed on the importance of giving communities resources for environmental conservation. Using shared water future as an example, the participatory method of policy formulation is developed, demonstrating how technical specialists’ conversation with the public translates technical knowledge into implementable policies, assisting communities in taking sustainable environmental action. In addition, the book also demonstrates how two values—appreciation and imagination—can be used to encourage environmental action.

The book grows more introspective and forward-looking as it nears its conclusion. The closure or reflection on the information presented in the book focuses on four key themes: innovative process, scalar connection, improvised action, and right relation. These reflections tie together the useful information presented in the book chapters and suggest the direction of environmental technical communication in the future. They address urgent environmental challenges and trace the development of the field’s answers to them. Overall, each topic covered in the book adds to the larger conversation about the function of communication in environmental action.

The book’s inclusiveness is highlighted by the wide range of examples it provides that go beyond North

America and Europe, and include voices from underrepresented groups, such as farmers and women in Morocco. This strategy makes sure that technical communication is used to explore all aspects of the world's environmental concerns, encouraging diverse and inclusive viewpoints. The book also advocates to ensure environmental justice, which ensures that a variety of stakeholders, especially underprivileged and underserved populations, are involved in creating environmental action. Thus, their opinions are heard, their concerns are taken seriously, and they are given the same chance to influence decisions that impact their surroundings and well-being. In addition, this book provides interesting information—for instance, the importance of Indigenous narratives, the role of communicative artifacts design in decision-making, the role of

education and community engagement in fostering environmental activism, ethics of environmental communication, the challenge of communicating local environmental issues in a global context, and the importance of taking an interdisciplinary approach.

This book is a foundational work that discusses the vital importance of good communication in addressing the pressing environmental issues of the day. For academics, professionals, and anyone else interested in the role of technical communication in environmental action, it is both theoretical and practical, making it a valuable resource. The book's interdisciplinary orientation assures that it is a resource for environmental scientists, policymakers, and activists, in addition to technical communicators.