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Proposal to the Department of Veterans affairs for revision of procedures for wheelchair procurement for house bound vets

Prime Objectives:

- Help Veterans and their Families
- Improve Veteran's quality of Life
- Save Money and Avoid Fraud



Introduction

Proposal to the Department of Veterans affairs for revision of procedures for wheelchair procurement by house bound vets

This is a proposal to reconsider the VA policy with regard to wheelchair procurement by house-bound veterans, specifically addressing the procedural matters, otherwise known as “red tape” that a veteran must wade through and that VA personnel must follow. When making the determination to issue wheel chairs prescribed to veterans by their local VA primary care doctors, the veteran is required to appear in person to be evaluated. I will argue that this is unnecessary and redundant and respectfully offer an alternative for your consideration. In particular, I want to examine the facet of the policy that requires veterans to report in person to one of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to qualify for and obtain clearance to receive the wheelchair.

These regional VA healthcare systems are fast becoming health super centers, much like Wal-Mart, one-stop shopping, where all Veterans within a certain radius of hundreds of miles are required to report in person for the sake of procedure. The perception is that the VA caters to the many of the needs of veterans, and the reality is that they do. In the following instance, however, I believe that technology and common sense will dictate a possible, reliable and obvious alternative that is cost effective, time saving and less stressful for both veteran and the hospital alike.

At Issue

First, let's establish that the VA does an excellent job providing medical care. In some instances, veterans wouldn't be able to obtain first-rate care anywhere else.

The VA's health care system now includes 157 medical centers, with at least one in each state, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. VA operates more than 1,300 sites of care including 862 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 134 nursing homes, 42 residential rehabilitation treatment programs, 207 Veterans Centers and 88 comprehensive home-care programs (<http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/vafacts.html>).

As an institution, a corporate entity if you will, the top priority is and should be the veteran. A lot of time and effort by a large number of smart and innovative thinkers encompasses the formation of policies instituted for a

specific reason. Often times, however, there arises an obstacle to an existing course that foreshows a shift in paradigms and establishes an alternate path of thinking worthy of consideration. That path, in this instance, is one that is mired with red tape and regulations that are obsolete, given the current availability technology.

The necessity of the veteran to appear in person takes both a personal (from a healthcare standpoint) and financial toll resulting from missed work by family or friends to transport the veteran who is not physically able to ride the community-style transportation the VA offers by way of vans or short buses and is one that can easily and effectively be avoided, saving time, money, and eliminating redundancy.

As an outside observer to the inner workings of the VA, I can only gather and research data available to me via public sources, such as the [VA's website](#), news reports and personal experience. My credentials in that area are as follows. I am a twice-served veteran of both the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Air Force Reserves and have been in the VA medical system as a patient since 1989. I have also assisted my grandfather with his VA provided medical care, often coordinating with *civilian* doctors and specialists and making certain that all of his prescriptions are listed with each provider. In that capacity and in the role of concerned grandchild, I have attended nearly every one of my grandfathers' appointments with the VA locally at the Youngstown campus and all of his appointments over the years in Cleveland at Wade Park and the Brecksville facilities.

It is with this background and knowledge of the system that I have identified what may be a potentially cost-effective way to alleviate upset to elderly or otherwise incapacitated veterans and the concurrent and exponential stresses it puts on both patient and family. Consequently, the benefit to the VA, besides accommodating its veterans, is an immediate and direct savings in transportation cost, staffing medical personnel and time.

I identify the problems of wheelchair procurement as follows:

- 1) The current model requires veterans to report in person for an unsubstantial evaluation that is both redundant and accomplishes nothing beyond cursory observations.
- 2) The current model does not allow for nor does it respect primary care doctors' medical opinions with regard to their patients.
- 3) The current model is redundant in that VA contractors that provide the wheelchairs at present DO come to the veteran's home prior-to approval to measure both the veteran's body (arm length, seated & standing height and weight) and home, (halls, doors, bathrooms).

Need Assessment

The Veterans Administration has been on the frontlines for many years when it comes to championing the needs and addressing the concerns of veterans of the Armed Services of the United States of America. The military's most valued resource is its troops. Upon discharge from active duty, every service man or woman's well-being and their medical care becomes the responsibility of the VA. It is in this spirit that I write this proposal, in hopes of instituting a policy change that makes sense while being considerate of the veteran's welfare. To illustrate my point I will discuss my personal experience with the process, though contemplation will reveal that it is demonstrative of what many thousands of veterans and their families experience each year.

Background

As previously stated, my interest in this issue stems from my involvement with my grandfather's VA medical care. The latter part of 1943 found my grandfather George Gura, as a husband to his wife Anna and father to their three children. He was working as a Baker when he answered his call to duty, as millions did, to fight for their country and for freedom. He was a part of the generation that did what they had to do so that many more could do what they want to do.

In Germany he served as part of a six-man .30 machine gun squad during World War II with the 104th Infantry Division, (Timberwolves) and assigned to D Company (Heavy Weapons), outside Berlin in 1945. He is currently age 93 and requires full-time oxygen. As a consequence of Congestive Heart Disease, my grandfather is unable to walk more than a few paces without experiencing respiratory duress.

Accordingly, grandpa's primary care doctors at the Youngstown VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) ordered a wheel chair to assist in his mobility and enhance his quality of life. Soon afterward a VA contractor arrived at our home and measured the doors and entrance ways, halls, bedrooms, breezeway and bathroom for wheelchair accessibility. Additionally, the contractor measured grandpa both in seated and standing positions and the length of his arms and administered a dexterity test. He then weighed grandpa and specified that he was right-handed. Grandfather was then scheduled to go to the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, Brecksville division, to be evaluated for the chair.

Best-laid Plans

The appointment date came and found grandfather not capable of attending because he was admitted to a local civilian hospital with Congestive Heart Failure (CHF). He developed Pneumonia and to complicate matters, a sac had formed in his lung resulting in Pleurisy. He spent over a week in the hospital, his health steadily declining before becoming stable. We rescheduled his appointment and were given a slot nearly six months from our original date.

Circumstances made traveling to the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, Brecksville division, from his home in Struthers, Ohio, located 134 miles round trip door to door, nearly impossible. He is not at all mobile and travel locally is difficult at best, let alone driving him over a hundred miles, oxygen tank in tow and no bathroom facilities in my vehicle. The toll on his health and well-being is further exacerbated by getting in and out of the vehicle. Once we arrived at Brecksville, I had to scavenge the halls for a wheelchair to transport grandfather from my vehicle to the facility and his appointment. After what I deem to be a considerable amount of time, I was able to locate a wheelchair, albeit one without an "E" tank oxygen bottle holder or footrests.

We waited in lobby/waiting room for several hours until his name was called, after which I wheeled him into a room and in front of a desk where a Nurse Practitioner was seated, clipboard at the ready, smile on her face and asked grandfather the following:

- if he was left or right handed
- how tall was he and how much he weighed
- how many feet he can walk unassisted without becoming tired
- how many grandchildren he had

The Nurse Practitioner then asked him to stand briefly in place, then to sit back down. This was the sum total of the examination that lasted only a few minutes, but took over 7 hours for us to accomplish. Requiring him to travel for such a trivial examination defies common sense. After transporting and securing grandfather in my vehicle and placing his oxygen tank behind the seat and the tubing back in his nose, rolled down the window and returned to the examination room. Once there I made inquiry as to the purpose for subjecting a markedly infirmed patient to such an ordeal to answer so few and so inane questions. I was told that it was because of previously made fraudulent claims for wheelchairs. When I countered by asking why his primary care doctors' assessment that he was a candidate for a wheel chair due to his *documented* condition, I was met with an incredulous response, that his primary care doctor "is not a physical therapist".

The week before that visit we had gone to a different building in the SAME facility at the Brecksville VA where grandpa had undergone a litany of tests and a thorough examination performed by a Compensation and Pension (C&P) Nurse Practitioner (NP). While performing the battery of hands-on examinations, the NP concurrently entered the data into a computer, resulting in direct and immediate updating of grandpa's official patient file. The NP remarked that grandpa had an appointment scheduled the following week to obtain the wheelchair he desperately required. Perplexed, she made several calls to Prosthetics on his behalf to no avail. This begs the question, why is one doctor's opinion not good enough for another doctor within the VA medical system? How many other veterans are faced with the same situation, taking risks by transporting veterans who are otherwise unable to travel well or are limited in their mobility due to health concerns.

Solution

I would argue that the solution lies with technology, integrity, common sense and hard medical facts. In no field has the advent of technological advances been more evident than in the medical profession. The VA, as a leader in testing and instituting new technologies, is ever concerned with upgrading and improving the lives and health care of veterans. To that end I propose that the VA adopt a new policy that will eliminate the following with regard to the current wheelchair procurement policy:

- Unnecessary travel
- Transportation cost
- Redundancy in diagnosis
- Inconvenience
- Time

The problems from the VA's standpoint are that they have to contend with and guard against fraud waste and abuse of the system while maintaining a program that unfortunately and on occasion experiences it.

- Fraudulent Claims
- Proper Diagnosis
- Fitting/Outfitting the wheelchair
- Meeting veterans' needs
- Cost

Why not embrace technology?

The solution is simple and cost-effective. For the most part, many facets of what I propose are already in place and can be instituted rather quickly with modest effort and cost necessary to integrate the modifications. [Microsoft Office Live Meeting](#) is a web-based or over-the-web technology that allows each user to communicate and visually see each other with the proper equipment, namely a computer and a web cam (hardware) and Microsoft Office Live Meeting (software).

VA already has complete medical profiles of all veterans in the system accessible with the last name and last four of the veteran's Social Security Number (SSN). Live net meet will facilitate the in-person meeting requirement (avoids the fraud concerns) and cuts back on travel time/convenience, cut down on transportation costs, salary of medical personnel.

Maximize your efficiency — while saving money and time! Conduct live, interactive meetings over the Internet, with just a phone and a web browser. [Microsoft Live Meeting Conference Center](#)—our flagship service—will enable your organization to deliver high-powered web seminars, online learning, sales demos and collaborative meetings in an instant! With pay-per-use, you can conduct as many meetings as you like with no limit to the number of participants. Pricing is based on actual usage per participant, per minute. [Microsoft Live Meeting Conference Center](#) details are available via the Microsoft Live Meeting Website: <http://main.livemeeting.com>

The benefits of [Net Meeting](#) are that the VA medical centers are already online, as are the records of all patients. Meeting via web cam will not only alleviate the travel time and other associated stresses, but instituting it would require little more than purchasing the web cams and plugging them into a doctor's examination room. From the Net Meet site the following added benefits are extolled:

- Unlimited online meetings with up to 10 participants
- Complimentary 24/7 customer support for you and all meeting participants
- Application sharing allows end-users to show or share any application on a desktop
- Web tours allow end-users to embed a web page and show it to everyone
- Polling slides enable end-users to ask questions & see results in real-time, right in front of your eyes!
- Ask your [Live Meeting Sales representative](#) for access to additional features like recording, archiving and desktop sharing

Budget

The following is a proposed model of a budget based on the number of existing VA facilities and derived from the assumption that each VA healthcare provider has access to and its staff the ability to operate computers.

Estimated Cost Analysis to Incorporate Net Meet

VA Medical Centers	1,444	\$649.00 per facility
Microsoft Live Net Meet	\$0.35 per minute	\$505.40
Patient/Doctor Time	5 minutes per meeting	\$35.00 per day based on 20 patients per day
Web Cam Cost	\$34.95 per cam	\$50,467.80

Timeline

The timeline is simple. As soon as the purchase orders are given the program should be able to be up and running in as little as 60 days. It should be noted that as the VA's sole purpose of existence is to care for the well-being of every qualifying injured and/or sick Veteran enrolled in the system, it makes good sense to do so in a manner that both addresses the needs of the Veteran and provides the best possible care in the best possible way at the best possible cost.

Utilizing technology to make the lives of suffering and infirmed Vets easier is a positive in so many ways. It has the potential to save time, money and most importantly to improve the lives of those who served so that our lives might be improved by freedoms bought through their sacrifice.

Academic literature review of multiple articles addressing the issues facing professional writers & technical communicators

Primary focus on:

- Structure
- Arguments
- Conclusions

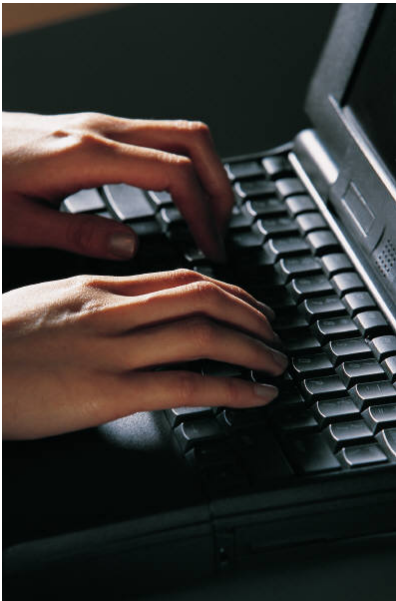


Introduction

Academic literature review of multiple articles addressing the issues facing professional writers & technical communicators

The face of professional writing has evolved over the past decades to become something of a catch-all term that is meant to encompass the many aspects and facets of the professional writing and technical communication fields. One important aspect of writing professionally involves the author having an audience. Knowing one's audience is crucial in the development of one's writing abilities and skill level. Another aspect equally important is that of a profession. I wanted to take a look at the state of the professional writing field as is applicable to employment and the issues facing professional writers & technical communicators in the workplace and in academia. To accomplish this goal I chose a variety of articles examining the:

- **Academic Job Market**
- **Frameworks that shape the work-world of new media**
- **How the identity of creative workers is formed and how it changes**
- **Workplace realities**
- **Distinctions between academic & workplace environments**
- **The study of college composition as an academic discipline**
- **Work in a variety of nontraditional, non-teaching positions**
- **Career Options For M.A.s and Ph.D.s in English**



Article critical analysis

Following is an in-depth critical analysis of the articles I found. By careful review of these articles, I expect to explore the many challenges and opportunities for a career as a writer both in academia and in the professional workplace. This report is broken down into sections that will examine the strengths, weakness and intersecting ideas respective to writing careers.

Article One

NCTE/CCCC's Recent War on Scholarship

By Richard H. Haswell

This article looks at scholarship underwriting by The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) with special regard to the teaching of postsecondary



composition. It examines the aforementioned institutions' eroding support for a type of scholarship known as RAD: *replicable, agreeable, and data supported* from the period of 1940 to 1999. Paying particular attention to the following:

- **Teaching of the research paper**
 - **Gain in writing skills during a writing course**
 - **Methods of peer critique**
-

The author aligns himself with the reverential ideology of Kent State University's Stephen Witte, Director of the Center for Research in Workplace Literacy, whose lust for alternative methodologies led him to launch the technical writing magazine, *Written Communication*, publishing the kinds of journal articles he wanted to write employing both established and innovative composition methods. Witte's take on the relationship between research topics and methods in discourse and composition studies, calls for combining genres and methods that other scholars mistrust. The author elucidates the opposition to competing methodologies of quantitative and qualitative studies, divergent to written text and the writing process, "a battle between form-bound rhetoric and audience-friendly rhetoric," (Farris, 2003).

The author cites Hillock's 1986 "meta-analysis of empirical studies" that "bridged classroom practice and research inquiry" with "the logic of discovery and the logic of validation" (Witte, 1987) The idea being that it is "counterproductive (to be) bickering about methodologies" and is hopeful that the ideas of "discovery and validation in composition research are at least sharing the same house" (Witte, 1987). The article goes on to explain the rift between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and calls upon postsecondary writing teachers to examine the practice of dwindling support for scholarship of "empirical inquiry, laboratory studies, data gathering, experimental investigation, formal research, hard research, and sometimes just research by the NCTE, established in 1911, and the CCCC, established in 1949,

my assumption that a method of scholarship under attack by one academic discipline in the United States but currently healthy and supported by every other academic discipline in the world to document historical trends in the study of the teaching of postsecondary writing during the past five decades, comparing scholarly work sponsored by NCTE/CCCC with similar work done elsewhere.

The crux of the article is concerned with what the consequences may be for the field and does so by both historically comparing scholarships previously supported by NCTE/CCCC and utilizing statistical analysis of bibliographic information from trade publications to track the change in support of RAD scholarships, characterized by inquiry that is:

- **Explicitly enough systematized in sampling, execution**
- **Is able through analysis to be replicated**
- **Can be factually supported and verified**
- **May or may not use statistics**
- **Includes case study in which one student/participant's background is defined**
- **Observation procedure and data analysis are specified**
- **Student/Participant's behavior recorded so study can be repeated & built on**
- **Includes an institutional writing-across-the-curriculum survey where courses sampled, questions asked, answers tabulated, and teacher practices are observed and reported so precisely that other people at other institutions could conduct similar surveys and be able to compare the data meaningfully**

The article concludes with the author making the case for the, "three representative issues of lasting importance to the enterprise of teaching college writing: the assignment of the research paper, the success of writing courses in improving student writing, and the practice of peer evaluation" and warns of the dangers down the road for postsecondary composition and rhetoric, asking tough questions like, "what happens when a professional organization is at war with its own scholarship?" and "what happens when the flagstaff organizations of a disciplinary field stop publishing systematically produced knowledge?" (Haswell 220). I think this was a good article that defined many of the issues and framed the argument well by backing it up with data, facts, and research.

Article Two

The Academic Job Market in Technical Communication, 2002-2003

By Carolyn Rude & Kelli Cargile Cook



This article is an analysis of the academic job market in 2002–2003 and uses that snapshot to procure ideas about the state of employment in the writing profession. The authors examined national ads for academic jobs with “technical” or “professional communication” as its search criteria.



Through statistical analysis of those jobs openings, they were able to ascertain that a very low number of applicants hired, 29%, claimed as their specialization, *technical* or *professional communication* and were further able to establish statistical analysis that denotes a higher priority being placed on teaching and research potential, rather than a particular research specialization. From their data they revealed that a much higher number, 62%, of jobs being filled in some form or another involved teaching in “related areas of composition, literature, or other writing courses” (*Rude/ Cook*). I wonder if this is a paradigm shift in academia. This article is from 2004, and the authors made their study in 2002-2003, so it is rather recent and exploits the issue well.

The authors address the expansion of new academic programs in technical and professional communication and spotlight the increased demand for credentialed faculty in the field. They expose the difficulty in meeting the demand for qualified personal amongst the numbers of students enrolled in and graduating from “field related degree programs” and the limited opportunities that exist for “lateral or upward academic movement” which in turn creates “retention problems” for faculties across the system. Conversely, clarifying how trends signal an impediment to the state of growth is not only evidenced by an overt awareness of stagnation in relation to career advancement, but apparent when scrutinizing the disparity between the demand for faculty and the supply of qualified personnel. At issue, the survival and growth of the profession as:

- **Programs cannot develop as planned**
- **Positions may be filled by people with little preparation or interest in field**
- **Research may suffer if faculty positions are held by people unfamiliar with the methods of research and research questions in this field**

They also address the concerns of English departments and the necessity to train personnel while developing over time newly graduated PhDs and accessing the time it takes to train them. The article also explains the narrow window or opportunities that are open within academia due to tenured positions that once open and filled, may not be open again for thirty years,

Growth of academic programs and the parallel demand for new faculty seem tied to growth of the role for technical communicators in the corporation, the dominant employer of graduates from undergraduate and master’s programs and academics have limited impact on that demand (*Rude/Cook*)

The authors offer solutions for enhancing, predicting, planning and developing data posted on the academic job market and are proponents for categorizing it into more distinct classifications. The state of the professional writing curriculum is also analyzed by the authors who have discovered that in most institutions, PWE is being taught as a service course or absorbed as a part of a larger dedicated program.

Like the previous article, these authors make use of statistical analysis to arrive at their conclusions. Through collaborative efforts with search chairs they also instituted a classification system to better

narrow and define the professional writing or technical communication fields. Following are their eight general categories, depending on the courses and degrees offered:

- **Service courses only**
- **Service courses and undergraduate majors and/or minors**
- **Service courses, undergraduate majors and/or minors, and master's degrees**
- **Service courses, undergraduate majors and/or minors, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees**
- **Service courses and either a master's degree or certificate and/or a doctoral degree**
- **Undergraduate majors and/or minors only**
- **Undergraduate majors and/or minors and master's degrees**
- **Undergraduate majors and/or minors, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees**

Writing is defined by the authors as a “multiple sign system, visual as well as verbal, and multiple media, digital as well as analog”. Consequently, it is advantageous for an author to

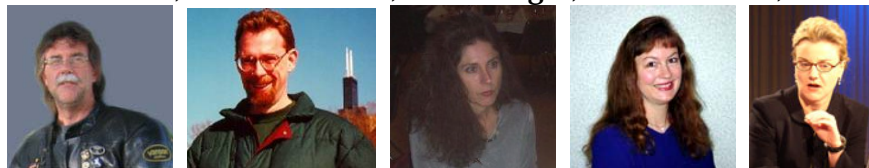
have something to say (to write) requires research, whether by interviews or testing or ethnographies, and other high-level mental skills, including judgments about the relative importance of data, ability to sort and organize, ability to make ethical judgments and apply them, and knowledge of varied audiences, including international audiences and people with visual or auditory impairments (Rude/Cook).

This article was helpful and offered many candid and valuable insights into the inner workings and considerations as well as the professional expectations of those entering into either academia or the professional workplace. It asked questions about the role PWE plays and demonstrates the need for unity as a community to shape and define where the future of professional communication lies.

Article Three

Looking elsewhere: career options other than the tenure-track teaching position for M.A.s and Ph.D.s in English

By John F. Barber, Keith Dorwick, Dene Grigar, Karen Howell, Linda Jorn



As the name of this article suggests, the job prospects for many graduate students in English departments is scarce. It deals with issues of inadequate compensation and the lack of benefits for those pursuing a graduate and Doctoral degree. The authors convey legitimacy to the aptitude of students to find jobs that are non-teaching related, but that incorporate the skills they've acquired in school. They note that those students whose focus was in the humanities will not be as desirable and their opportunities meager compared to those whose focus was less conventional and more reliant on composition/PWE skills since, “teaching positions may not require the skills of rhetoric or formal teaching skills or research opportunities” available to them.

To accomplish their research of non-traditional jobs the authors used a common sense approach by contacting a “number of individuals who had found work in a variety of nontraditional, non-teaching positions” and recorded and interviewed them about their real world experiences in finding employment. What the authors discovered was that the job market for English majors is bleak, stating that fewer than “20 percent of the Ph.D.s (are) in tenure-track jobs; the other 80-plus percent are unemployed or employed in temporary positions at starvation wages without benefits” and describes the outlook as despairing at best.

To back them up, the authors consulted the final report of the Modern Language Association Committee on Professional Employment (1997) and assigned the “perceived intensity of the job crisis” to what Guillory and Laurence call the “pronounced ambiguity associated with graduate study in our fields” leading to a disproportionate number of viable opportunities and assumes that upon completion of a program that a job is somehow intimated. As the authors discovered – nothing could be further from the truth.

The authors recognize and call for a sea change of monumental proportions on system-wide basis. Though some students find the occasional traditional teaching assistant and tenure-track positions, they face another battle – sweat equity. They often find themselves trapped in low paying benefit-less position. The authors, through extensive interviews with successful people who have pursued and found employment unrelated to education, offer insights into the options for an alternative means of employment outside the academy. The article addresses the concerns of aspiring graduate students turned job seekers by recording and sharing the strategies of those who have made the leap. For their study the authors had first selected six candidates and asked them the following questions:

- **Can you identify one or two factors which were essential in your decision to take the career path that you have?**
- **Having worked in this capacity for x amount of time, what do you see as the primary benefits? Or, what does this position enable you to do that you could not have done, or done easily, in a traditional tenure-track position?**
- **Ditto two for liabilities? What have you given up to take this position?**
- **What part, if any, of your graduate program best prepared you for this position?**

The authors sustain the interviews for the remainder of the article. They are each annotated by the interviewees and the conversational speech is replaced with proper pronouns etc. I found that all of the interviews were very direct and discerning, especially in light of my graduating soon. They offered suggestions and possible strategies that I believe will prove most beneficial in conducting my own job search.

Article Four



Teaching in a High-Tech Conference Room: Academic Adaptations and Workplace Simulations

By Louis Rehling

This article concerns itself with the matter of the *work space* that professional writers utilize and also examines the methods of teaching the use of these tools. It is crucial that students are ready to step into a real-world situation and the high-tech classroom’s goal is to both familiarize and train students to recognize the differences readily apparent between academic and workplace environments. It studies and explains the conflict between the rhetoric and the real world concerns of professional writing and technical communicators. This article explains the following:

- **students’ learning of course content (how drastically it improves)**
- **collaborative writing strategies**
- **project management**

- **teamwork**
- **research methods**
- **presentation and design skills**
- **organizational culture and professional development**
- **idea sharing and communication**
- **preparation for transitioning to the workplace**

The author is interested with professional writing pedagogy and workplace writing and workplace simulation as can be emulated in the classroom. Her views may seem maverick to some more rigid traditionalists, but her focus is immediately apparent – workplace transition with a heavy emphasis placed on teamwork, cohesion, and collaborative writing while equipping her students with a working template on which to build, thereby better preparing them for life beyond the Ivory Tower.

The specialized teaching space that I describe in this article simulates a workplace environment through a combination of physical features, specialized electronic tools tailored for decision-making communication (vs. designed for writing per se), and on-site technical support. For teachers and students of professional writing, using a classroom space that is not only high-tech but also designed and serviced with workplace features addresses critical new issues for specialized learning in our specialized field (Rehling)

The author expresses a desire to formulate in the classroom and true representation of the workplace. Addressing such issues as the physical circumstances under which writers work, “particularly how their positioning puts them in visual or auditory contact with other workers. She also examines the accessibility of tools that ease a writers’ writing process and how that interaction affects the quality and content of the writing done in that particular workspace. Central to her report are the conditions of the workplace endured by writers. She scrutinizes how a writer can be proficient and thrive in an environment that is uncomfortable and ergonomically hostile. Furthermore, elucidation about the structure of corporate office environments and ideas about communication and how it can be both effective and efficient when such factors are given proper consideration. The author has a penchant for teamwork and demonstrates the necessity for it in the professional workplace.

The article is a good one and tracks the saga of instituting a new methodology of learning. It is very informative and addresses pertinent and timely issues confronting the teaching of high tech in the classroom, as students are likely to see in the real world. The software installed for use in the collaboratory (this is the name of their high tech classroom and is shared by a number of administration and staff) is a networked program called GroupSystems,”a business-meeting software designed to encourage productive and efficient workplace problem-solving exchanges,

GroupSystems is decision-making software designed for corporate environments. Its users can anonymously participate in a variety of guided exercises to collectively brainstorm, categorize, or comment on ideas; vote on survey questions; rate or rank items for discussion; and so on. Participants can view contributions and statistical summaries on their laptops, on the large projection screen, or in printed reports (the facility also includes a laser printer). A “sophisticated tool” with “distinctive features,” GroupSystems emphasizes “communication, action, and decisions” (Tullar et al., 1998, pp. 58-59).

As you know, the workplace is ever evolving, changing with every passing day and every technological advance. I envision a day in the not too distant future when the holographic 3D (see Princess Leah – Star Wars) work environments are a reality. But for now the author is focused on office environments

where the “organizational communication systems based on new technologies are more and more becoming critical company resources that encourage internal interactions and effective communication for strategic advantage (Tucker, Meyer, & Westerman). I would have to agree with this article and its assumptions and would rate this one as the best of the five.

Article Five

The Divergent Worlds of New Media: How Policy Shapes Work in the Creative Economy.

By Susan Christopherson



In this article about the “New media” workers that have emerged from the *creative economy* as, “digital designers, web page designers, and producers of entertainment products,” and how they are now termed or fall into the category of creative commodity producers and the clashing of ideas between that which is technical and that which is expressive. She intimates that personal expression and authorship are integral parts of the same whole. There is also a discussion about the formation of a “new occupational and professional identity. The place in advanced economies for these new workers is the broader framework that shapes her discussion. She relies on the policy making of the United States as her backdrop and explains how new media workers must themselves sell their skills and services in the market and shaped by the technology it uses.

This entrepreneurial activity and how it changes in “interaction with broader economic and cultural transformations (du Gay, 1996, 1997; McRobbie, 1998, 2002). She explains how many creative workers are caught in maelstrom of ever-changing software and design tools that they must learn and adapt to and in most cases how they, “seemingly making up their careers as they go along.” The author examines identity formation and how it foretells how producers of cultural “products view the environments within which they work and what factors are important to forming their identities in the emerging creative, knowledge-based economy.”

The author talks about Project-based production as having always been the norm in creative work as evidenced by advertising campaigns, fashion or trade shows, and art exhibits. The new media economy makes sense according to her as companies can farm out their creative services, eliminating the need for staff and benefits for such internal positions in their companies.

The direction of the new media economy is certainly being steered by technology and the author is keenly aware of the implications to the new media workers. The challenges facing them in the new economy are real and inherent to small businesses particularly. The author explains the necessity for workers to take ownership of their careers, employing such methods as networking and the issues and concerns of would be employers, are the worker’s skill sets sufficient to get the job done and issues of time and workflow.

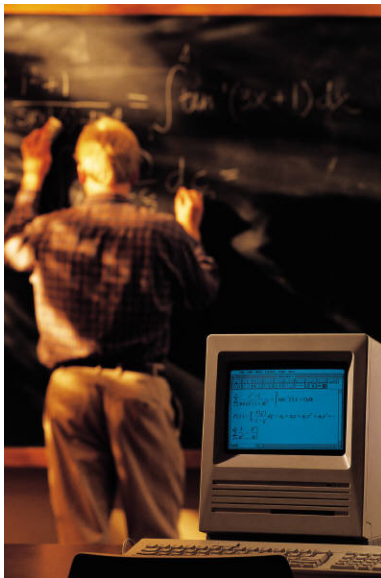
I found this article to be revealing as it is relevant.

Implications

The Workplace Has evolved into a much different animal than it was when someone like my grandfather entered the workforce. He was able to work the same job for 40 years and retire with a pension and benefits.



In today's new economy he would be forced to change jobs every two or three years in some cases. Given the current atmosphere of employability that exists in an ever-changing workplace you need to be adaptable while consistently producing good work. You must understand the challenges that exist. YOU WILL CHANGE with the times or they will leave in the past. Emergent technologies require that one focus on new skill sets while maintaining the ability to communicate effectively and be a team player if there is any hope to be a viable member of the new economy.



The Challenges Facing Academia are no different; in fact, in some cases they pose even more daunting questions. True, that the view from the Ivory Towers doesn't look all that bad from the casual observers' perspective, dominating the perception that teachers have it so good, namely for the apparent security and the chance to achieve tenure. Lots of time off, sabbaticals, the list goes on. But what is not considered is the behind the scenes tensions of daily interaction with the most precious commodity – the mind.

Interconnectedness. It is part and parcel of the job – making a connection with theory and rhetoric and spurring thought and ideas and growth – the pursuers of knowledge and the purveyors of knowledge are charged with a heavy burden. A great deal of what is espoused in the articles I read deal with the connection and personal responsibility to take the initiative in changing and evolving with the times.

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