

Technical and Scientific Communications Committee

In today's rapidly changing world, there is a growing need for technical and scientific writers who can communicate clearly and succinctly to professionals and lay persons. Unfortunately, teaching at all levels has not kept up with this need, concentrating instead on the traditional forms of creative and informational writing. NCTE should be leading the movement to increase teachers' interest and skill in teaching technical and scientific writing.

Charge: *To play a prominent role in increasing our professional community's awareness and skill in teaching technical and scientific communication by*

- *holding an open committee meeting and presenting awards at the [NCTE Annual Convention](#),*
- *recommending experts in the field who could author NCTE publications, develop online courses or digital learning experiences, and/or speak at the annual convention, and*
- *suggesting opportunities to collaborate with other professional or scholarly organizations on the generation or dissemination of information about technical and scientific communication to teachers of all disciplines.*

When the Committee was reconstituted (2008), it was given a new charge: to assist NCTE in leading the movement to increase teachers' interest and skill in teaching technical and scientific writing by 1) holding an open committee meeting at the NCTE convention; 2) recommending experts in the field who could author NCTE publications, develop online courses or digital learning experiences, and/or speak at the annual convention; and 3) suggesting opportunities to collaborate with other professional or scholarly organizations on the generation or dissemination of information about technical and scientific communication to teachers of all disciplines.

The committee has embraced this charge with enthusiasm and vigor, convening open meetings at the annual conference and spearheading a range of new initiatives. These initiatives—several in the works as well as others in the planning stage—will require ongoing oversight of a reconstituted CSTC committee.

One of the most important initiatives is speakers and sessions at the annual meeting aimed at dissemination of information about technical and scientific communication to teachers of all disciplines. For the 2009 meeting, the CSTC formally proposed an accomplished educator in technical communication to speak on innovative classroom uses of the National Gallery of Writing. The committee also carried out a very successful roundtable: "Technical Communication and the 21st Century: A Roundtable for the Secondary English Education Community." While participant feedback at this session demonstrated a growing interest among teachers—both elementary and secondary—in expanding classroom writing genres, it was clear that teachers know little about technical, scientific, and professional communication as a powerful means of supporting their learning goals in the classroom.

The Committee has initiated measures to address this gap.

1. The first measure is an alliance with ATTW (Association of Teachers of Technical Writing) to develop collaborative proposals for NCTE annual meetings. This year the alliance, lead by a member of CSTC, issued a nation-wide "call of interest" in order to identify educators with experience in (or original research about) integrating technical communication in K-12 writing classroom. Based on this call, CSTC orchestrated two session proposals for the 2010 annual meeting, One session targets strategies for teaching scientific literacy by attending to the visual, written, mathematical, and oral components of scientific communication; the other session targets a best practices approach to real-world writing.
2. The second measure is fostering publications relevant to K-12 teachers. CSTC is near closure in arrangements to sponsor a regular column in the *English Journal*. The column will introduce *English Journal* readers to professional writing concepts and teaching ideas: how technical/professional writing can be combined with other, more traditional studies of writing, literature and language and how technical/professional writing can help K-12 teachers expand their teaching to include new projects and genres. The *EJ* editor is enthusiastic about this proposal, and we anticipate formal approval of the proposal within the coming weeks. The *EJ* column, which two members of CSTC will oversee, marks an important step forward in the committee's initiatives. In the past the committee sponsored publications

in technical, scientific, and professional communication targeting specialists in the field at the college level. The *EJ* column thus constitutes a new direction for CTSC and will fill a significant void in materials available to K-12 teachers.

CTSC envisions its collaborative proposal initiative and *EJ* column as long-term projects that will lead to expanded initiatives while immediately advancing the following key committee goals:

- Disseminating information that shows K-12 teachers how the teaching of technical/professional writing is a way to enact promising writing pedagogies and to align with NCTE standards. A key component of this goal is addressing English arts teachers' concern about the vocational emphasis of technical and professional writing. CSTC's goal is to show that technical /professional writing pedagogy actually prompts critical thinking and teaches rhetorical attention to audience, purpose, and genre, applicable across a wide range of composing situations.
- Promoting collaborations, not just between NCTE and ATTW and other technical communication groups, but between college-level and K-12 level teachers. The 2010 proposal on scientific literary, for example, features a collaboration between an Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of technical communication and a Cumberland, Maine high-school teacher.

The Committee has made important strides in carrying out its new NCTE mission. Because the above mentioned projects—along with others in the planning stage and the NCTE Awards in Technical and Scientific Communication—will require time and oversight, the committee requests that NCTE reconstitute the committee for another three-year term.

Charlotte Thralls, Chair