Even so, I think it will find an appreciative audience, despite its many shortcomings, because of its counter-balancing strengths.


Reviewed by Nell Ann Pickett, Hinds Community College

I recommend Anne Eisenberg’s *Writing Well for the Technical Professions.* This excellent introduction to technical writing by Polytechnic University’s Eisenberg is concerned with the “imperatives of research, audience analysis, organization, language, and visual impact.” Visual impact is the initial, overriding impression of this textbook. As I leafed through the book, I liked its feel, its trim size, its use of a second color (for section divisions and chapter beginnings, for accent in headings, for rules in boxes of examples of writing), its incorporation of virtually every kind of print visuals, its uncrowded pages with lots of white space—the book’s total layout and design.

Students will like this book. It shows while it tells. The many examples of professional writing are laced with visuals. The examples often are annotated, and many of them are given in three versions to reflect the writer’s development in thought, organization, and attention to visual impact. The summaries at the ends of chapters highlight main points, and the numerous and varied exercises include many case situations.

The six parts cover all the areas expected in an introductory technical writing text: audience analysis, organizational patterns, library research, correspondence, reports, and oral presentations. The text also contains a brief (twenty-two-page) handbook that addresses typical problems in grammatical usage and punctuation.

But there is more: four of the twenty chapters distinguish this book from all others: “A Legacy of Good Writing,” “Language,” “Visual Display,” and “Direct Observation: Using a Notebook.” Eisenberg discusses the qualities of technical writing from the ancients to the present, demonstrates how language distinction is crucial to good technical writing, shows how design and illustration help make technical text readable and interesting, and explains how keeping a notebook “hones the eye, develops the writer’s descriptive powers, and adds to the writer’s skill at ordering evidence and drawing inferences.”
While Eisenberg's text is perfect for an introductory course, Susan Feinberg's *Components of Technical Writing* is an excellent choice for advanced and graduate courses in technical communication. Feinberg's text has a broad base of substance. She writes, "This book attempts to do three things: to teach, to provide examples, and to offer advice based on current research and experience in the field." And she does just that—and does it well.

The section headings announce the organization of the book (and its modules): "The Components of Technical Writing" (five modules), "The Composition of Technical Reports" (six modules), and "The Components of Professional Communication" (three modules). In addition, there is a handy forty-page style manual treating such topics as documentation, grammar, mechanics, and proofing.

Each of the fourteen self-contained modules has these components: introduction, scope (in list form), discussion, exercises (following each major segment of discussion), summary, checklist, notes, references, and applications. The sample pieces of writing, most of which are by students at Feinberg's institution, are presented as figures; thus, the segments of discussion and explanation are visually complemented by the student texts.

All of this adds up to a book that is well organized, thorough, and well balanced in its basis on teaching, experience, and research.

---

**ATAC Elections**

Elections for officers of the Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition will be held at the ATAC special interest session of the Conference on College Composition and Communication convention in March 1990. Please send nominations and self-nominations to Evelyn Ashton-Jones; Department of English; University of Idaho; Moscow, ID 83843. All nominees must be present at the special interest session.

---

**CCCC and MLA**

All subscribers to *JAC* are members of the Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition. ATAC sponsors panel presentations at the annual MLA and CCCC conventions. If you are an ATAC member interested in participating, contact Kathleen Welch or William Covino. You are also invited to attend ATAC's annual business meeting at CCCC.