REVIEW:

TECHNICAL AND BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN TWO-YEAR PROGRAMS

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The title of Technical and Business Communication in Two-Year Programs suggests its main focus and audience: the book covers material of particular interest to teachers in junior or community colleges and two-year technical institutes. As such, the book addresses problems teachers in four-year institutions may not encounter—e.g., teaching technical writing to lower-division students with little experience in their fields; providing adequate writing instruction in a limited time to students who may take technical or business writing instead of freshman composition. The essays in the book, written especially for it by teachers experienced in two-year programs, offer possible solutions to these problems and provide assistance in other areas as well.

The editors have divided these essays into seven parts. The first, "Gearing Up," provides a context by addressing general concerns. For example, James A. Reinking and George Abraham ("Toward More Effective Technical Writing Courses") identify impediments facing technical writing instructors, while Laura Weaver ("The Professional and Psychological Preparation of New Teachers of Business and Technical Writing") discusses resources which will help English teachers become effective business and technical writing instructors. Harriet Hogan ("Distinguishing Characteristics of the Technical Writing Course") then presents four topics which set technical writing courses apart from other writing courses. Lastly, Thomas Sawyer ("Understanding the Rhetoric of Scientific Writing") discusses the nature of the sciences and scientific investigation, then suggests teachers untrained in scientific fields ask scientists for operational definitions of their work, to assure communication.

Parts two through six in the book then address specific
pedagogical questions. All the essays in Part Two, "Developing the Basic Course," concern the issue of creating a relevant course. James W. Hill ("You, Too, Can Teach a Relevant Course in Technical Writing") and Terry Skelton ("A Comprehensive Skills Approach to Course Design") suggest designing technical writing courses around the subjects and skills important in graduates' fields. Terence J. Glenn and Marcus M. Green ("The Graduate Survey and Its Role in Course Revision") then illustrate how Cincinnati Technical College accomplished this goal.

The essays in Part Three, "Broadening the Basic Course," extend the focus of the book beyond the individual technical or business writing course. Gladys W. Abraham ("Writing: An Institutionwide approach") discusses Rochester Institute of Technology's plan for writing programs carried on outside the English Department. Charles E. Albrecht and Leigh S. Barker ("Establishing a Technical Communication Program at a Two-Year College") then offer five suggestions for setting up such programs, while Charles R. Duke ("Public Communication Internships: An Outlet for Technical Writing") discusses an internship program established with state agencies in New Hampshire as a means of developing classroom skills in a real-world setting.

The essays in Part Four, "Developing Classroom Strategies," all offer advice on pedagogical approaches to an entire course or a significant part of a course. David H. Covington ("The 'Business' of Communication Courses: A Simulation Approach") discusses setting up an employer/employee relationship with students, while Ron Carter ("Writing on the Job: Communication as Design") talks about process courses (writing as design) as an alternative to courses focusing on types of documents (writing as imitation). Kitty O. Locker and Michael L. Keene ("Using Toulmin Logic in Business and Technical Writing Classes") apply Toulmin's model of evidence, warrant, and claim to technical writing instruction, as a way of helping students think and write more logically. Ron Dulek ("Zen and the Art of Business Letter Writing: 'Bad-News' Strategies") provides an inductive method for teaching the "bad-news" letter, and, in co-operation with Annett Selby ("An Alternative: The Student Journal") also describes a method for encouraging more student writing without overwhelming instructors with papers to grade. The method uses a journal, where students write up to two letters a week; peer review; and submission of selected letters for a grade. Don Bush ("The Neglected Periodic
Then addresses style by making a case for delaying important points until the ends of sentences.

Part Five, "Constructing Effective Assignments," is a logical complement to Part Four. Eugene W. Etheridge ("Teaching the In-House Memo to Technologists") describes exercises in the action memo and test report, two common forms of technical writing, while Chester L. Wolford ("The D. M. I. Letter: A Case Study") provides a case in which the students plays the role of staff person for a power company. Wolford then discusses the case's use in the classroom. Thomas L. Warren ("Teaching the Description of a Specific Mechanism") offers an exercise where students must describe a toy car for specific audiences and provides an example of the resulting document. Elizabeth Tebeaux ("Developing and Presenting Library Instruction for Technical Writing") then shows how to include library instruction in technical writing pedagogy by developing a program of colored slides, followed by a library tour.

Part Six "Reading and Writing Reports," narrows the focus of parts four and five by taking up one assignment: the technical report. Kitty O. Locker ("The Minireport: An Alternative to Formal Reports in Basic Business and Technical Writing Classes") presents the minireport as a timesaving method for including the technical report in already-crowded course schedules. The minireport includes only the title page, transmittal letter, table of contents, table of illustrations, and abstract, but asks students to conceptualize the entire document. Gail W. Pieper ("The Poster Session: An Alternative to the Oral Report") describes a poster session, where students devise a graphical presentation of a topic, with a brief text, then display the poster. This session involves oral skills but is more realistic in terms of audience than the traditional oral report. William E. Rivers ("The Importance of Summaries and Their Use in the Applied Writing Class") then makes a case for teaching summarizing as a skill, discusses types of summaries, and provides exercises for classroom use. Lastly, Stephen Gresham ("Analysis of Professional Periodicals: A Recommendation Report") describes an exercise where students gain knowledge of the important periodicals in their fields.

Part Seven, "Growing as a Professional," ends the book appropriately by providing additional sources of information for business and technical writing teachers. Carolyn R. Miller and Bertie E. Fearing ("Resources for Teachers of Business, Technical, and Vocational Writing") present a bibliography list-
ing organizations, institutes and workshops, journals, teacher preparation material, textbooks, reference works and resources, and bibliographies of interest to these instructors.

*Technical and Business Communication in Two-Year Programs* provides the new teacher in this field with interesting and perceptive insights into technical- and business-writing instruction. However, the book also offers suggestions of use to experienced teachers. Moreover, many of these suggestions are not limited to the context of two-year programs. Teachers at four-year institutions may benefit from the book’s discussion of theoretical issues, presentation of specific pedagogical ideas, and list of resources as well. This breadth of appeal makes *Technical and Business Communication in Two-Year Programs* a welcome addition to NCTE’s series of essay collections on technical and scientific communication.

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