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#### ABSTRACT

A study examined a set of 78 journal articles identified as influential in technical communication (published between 1988 and 1992) and a preliminary list of 63 articles frequently cited between 1993 and 1997. The texts were organized into six topical groups: profession, rhetoric and composition, document design, social construction and collaboration, and workplace communication. These topics identify the competencies and meta-skills with which technical communication directs its problem-solving activities. Results indicate that the competencies and accompanying meta-skills reveal the literacies (stories) associated with technical communication that establish its place as a discipline--in particular, concerns for document design, text production, and workplace communication. (The table listing texts frequently cited by authors in technical communication journals is presented.) (RS)



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#### Points of Reference in our Disciplinary Activities - ATTW

One way to identify the major figures in the history of ATTW and the field of technical communication is to review one of the forums—our journals. The authors have contributed to our conversations and the journals have recorded these conversations. The conversations form a significant portion of our knowledge base. We read the journals and refer to them as we build our knowledge base. Others also refer to our journals for a better understanding of technical communication.

I will identify the authors who have published frequently in the journals, and I will provide a brief characterization of their scholarship and contribution to the disciplinary activities of technical communication. Their texts have become frequent points of reference as we negotiate our disciplinary activities and build our knowledge base.

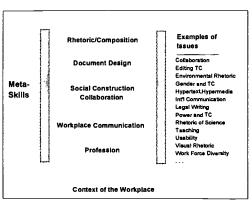
This presentation may be considered Part I of a two-part presentation. The texts identified form a significant portion of the knowledge base that identifies the competencies and meta-skills associated with technical communication. I will argue in my CCCC presentation that these competencies and meta-skills represent the discipline of technical communication particularly, its concerns for document design, text production, and workplace communication.

#### Identifying Competencies—Developing Meta-skills — CCCC

Jimmie Killingsworth suggested at the 1997 CCCC that we may want to use the term meta-skills to describe what we study, research, and teach. [Killingsworth used the terms myths and narratives, not meta-skills, in his paper. As we discussed the myths associated with technical communication, some of us may have shifted to using meta-skills, a term out of the social sciences.] Meta-skills—What does the term mean? What are the meta-skills? Why does it describe our professional and disciplinary activities? How do meta-skills link our activities to the workplace?

To respond to the questions, I look at recent history to a set of 78 texts I identified as influential in our publications between 1988 and 1992 and a preliminary list of 63 texts frequently cited between 1993 and 1997. The texts are organized in six topical groups: Profession, Rhetoric and Composition, Document Design, Social Construction and Collaboration, and Workplace Communication. These topics identify the competencies and meta-skills with which technical communication directs its problem-solving activities.

I will argue that the competencies and accompanying meta-skills, reveal the literacies (stories) associated with technical communication that establish its place as a discipline—in particular, concerns for document design, text production, and workplace communication. But, I will argue that these competencies and meta-skills adapt to changes in communication needs and technology. [Killingsworth, M. Jimmie. "Technical Communication in the 21st Century: Where Are We Going?" Conference on College Composition and Communication. Phoenix, 15 March 1997.]



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Social Sciences	Rhetorical/Literary
competencies	myths
literacies	narratives
meta-skills	

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### Representative Text

The 78 most frequently cited texts were culled from the citations for 1988-1992. The list developing for 1993-1997 is representative of more recent citations in the technical communication journals. The texts are grouped under topics I am referring to as meta-skills, competencies, or literacies—terms I am exploring as part of my conference presentations. I welcome comments.

- I 1988-92 Most frequently cited texts from articles published in IEEE, JBTC, JTWC, TC, and TWT/TCQ (1988-1992).
- II 1993-97 PRELIMINARY LIST of frequently cited texts from articles published in *JBTC*, *JTWC*, and *TCQ* (1993-1997). The list is incomplete. I need to collect the citations from *IEEE* and *TC* and verify each entry.
  - Topic The topics refer broadly to the meta-skills or competencies that define technical communication. I have tentatively assigned a topic to most (but not all) of the text on the 1993-1997 list.
    - P Profession
    - RC Rhetoric and Composition (includes rhetoric of science and technology)
    - DD Document Design
    - SC Social Construction and Collaboration
    - WC Workplace Communication
    - not classified yet

Text Frequently Cited by Authors Publishing in the Technical Communication Journals IEEE, JBTC, JTWC, TC, and TCQ

I	II	Topic	
	X	_	Allen, Jo. "Gender Issues in Technical Communication Studies." JBTC 5 (1991): 371.92.
X	X	SC	Allen, Nancy, Dianne Atkinson, Meg Morgan, Teresa Moore, and Craig Snow. "What Experienced Collaborators Say About Collaborative Writing." <i>JBTC</i> 1 (1987): 70-90.
X	X	WC	Anderson, Paul V. "What Survey Research Tells Us About Writing at Work." Writing in Nonacademic Settings. Eds. Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami. New York: Guilford, 1985. 3-83.
Х		P	Anderson, Paul V., R. John Brockmann, and Carolyn R. Miller, eds. New Essays in Technical and Scientific Communication: Research, Theory, Practice. Farmingdale, NY: Baywood, 1983.
	X		Anson, Chris M., and L. Lee Forsberg. "Moving Beyond the Academic Community." WC 7 (1990): 200-31.
X		DD	Atlas, M. A. "The User Edit: Making Manuals Easier to Use." IEEE 24 (1981): 28-29.
	X	RC	Bakhtin, M. M. The Dialogic Imagination. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
	X	RC	Bakhtin, M. M. Speech Genres and Other Late Essays. Ed. Caryl and Michael Holquist. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986.
	x	_	Barabas, Christine. Technical Writing in a Corporate Culture: A Study of the Nature of Information. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1990.
x		DD	Barton, Ben F., and Marthalee S. Barton. "Simplicity in Visual Representation: A Semiotic Approach." <i>JBTC</i> 1 (1987): 9-26.
X		RC	Bazerman, Charles. "Scientific Writing as a Social Act: A Review of the Literature of the Sociology of Science." New Essays in Technical and Scientific Communication: Research, Theory, Practice. Eds. Paul V. Anderson, R. John Brockmann, and Carolyn R. Miller. Farmingdale, NY: Baywood, 1983. 156-84.



X         RC         Bazerman, Charles. Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science. Madison: U WI P, 1988.           X         WC         Bazerman, Charles, and James Paradis, eds. Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991.           X         —         Beard, John D., Jone Rymer, and David L. Williams. "An Assessment System for Collaborative-Writing Groups: Theory and Empirical Evaluation." JBTC 3 (1989): 29-51.           X         X         SC         Belenky, Mary F., Blythe M. Clinchy, Nancy R. Goldberger, and Jill M. Tarule. Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self. Voice, and Mind. New York: Basic Books, 1986.           X         DD         Benson, Philippa J. "Writing Visually: Design Considerations in Technical Publications." TC 32 (1985): 35-39.           X         DD         Bernhardt, Stephen. "Seeing the Text." CCC 37 (1986): 66-78.           X         DD         Bernhardt, Stephen. "Seeing the Text." CCC 37 (1986): 66-78.           X         DD         Bernhardt, Stephen. "Seeing the Text." CCC 37 (1986): 66-78.           X         DD         Bernhardt, Stephen. "Seeing the Text." CCC 37 (1986): 66-78.           X         DD         Bernhardt, Stephen. "Seeing the Text." CCC 37 (1986): 66-78.           X         DD         Bernhardt, Stephen. "Seeing the Text." CCC 37 (1986): 66-78.           X         DD         Bernhar							
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Journal	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total	
IEEE	33	46	38	32	35						184	articles
	325	923	480	634	649						3011	citations
JBTC	10	6	7	21	13	21	21	20	24	24	167	articles
	386	260	219	695	585	726	974	602	718	627	5792	citations
JTWC	22	23	22	25	24	28	32	26	37	33	272	articles
	416	399	348	487	520	528	425	415	537	504	4579	citations
TC	30	30	33	29	28						150	articles
	260	568	225	595	686						2334	citations
TCQ	19	18	19	17	18	23	19	18	16	23	190	articles
	282	283	389	241	599	690	692	586	425	644	4831	citations
Total	114	123	119	124	118	72	72	64	77	80	963	articles
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