Audience, Purpose, Genre, and Medium

WHAT IS TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION?

Technical communication refers to the activity of preparing and publishing specialized information in a way that allows non-specialists to understand and use the information to accomplish some task. While the information can be presented verbally in an oral presentation, a class, or even over the phone, it most often takes a written or visual form. Although it was founded relatively recently (in 2005), YouTube® has become a main outlet for video of all kinds. Over one billion people use YouTube—one out of every two Internet users. Today's technical communicators have YouTube and many other online mediums for delivering content. Effective technical communication in 2020 demands multimedia approaches to communication, an understanding and ability to use social media, and fundamental rhetorical awareness of who you are communicating with (audience), what you are trying to communicate (message), why you are trying to communicate this message to this audience (purpose), how you propose to get the message across (genre), and what medium will best accomplish your purpose.

Here are some examples of technical communication:

- online manuals (print or PDF versions as well as help screens)
- assembly instructions for appliances, equipment, furniture, toys, and games
- research articles that present scientific or technological discoveries
- magazine articles that explain how to complete a process— preparing yellow chicken curry or a dovetail joint
- training videos that demonstrate a process
- instructions on how to register online or create an online account
- online communities of users that exchange and/or continuously update technical information or document processes

In most cases, readers of technical communication come to the information to learn or to do something that otherwise they could not do. If effective, the technical communication should make it possible—and even easy—to comprehend the information and to act on it to perform the task. Technical documents generally share this main purpose: to inform.

## HOW DOES TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION DIFFER FROM OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATION?

All writing takes place in a specific context, and all writing involves these elements: a writer/speaker, a message, and a reader/listener. Two of the main differences between technical communication and other types of communication are that 1) its subject matter usually requires some type of specialized knowledge and 2) it provides a bridge for the non-specialist reader to complete an action successfully. It also incorporates visual elements where they help readers more easily accomplish the task. Some people call technical communication "instrumental" because it works as an instrument or tool for people to get something done.

Figure 1.1 shows one way to think about the relationship between writer, reader, and text in any kind of writing. In this diagram, reality forms a third point on the triangle, which shapes the relationship between the writer (encoder), the reader (decoder), and the text or document (signal). In technical communication, the text represents a version of reality prepared by the writer for the reader. Each type of writing focuses on a different aspect of the triangle. For example, writing that focuses on the writer/speaker is called "expressive," and examples include personal letters, diaries, and journals. Writing that focuses on the reader/listener is called "persuasive," and examples include advertising and editorials in newspapers. Writing with a central focus on the text itself (the words) is "literary"; examples include the kinds of literature studied in English classes: poetry, fiction, and drama. Finally, writing that focuses on "reality" is technical and scientific and includes textbooks, user instructions, and reports.

One major flaw in this model is the omission of context. We could add it to the model as a rectangle around the triangle. While important in any writing, context is crucial in technical and professional communication because it affects how users understand texts. Ignoring context guarantees that your writing is unsuccessful: for example, you might create a short instructional video for operating a chainsaw but the operators' context for viewing the video is outdoors with no place to set the device down and, and when the chainsaw is running, an environment too loud to hear any voiceover. A rectangular card, laminated in plastic, is a more usable format for this instructional information, one that recognizes the context for its use by the chainsaw operator and responds to this need.

How can the communication triangle help you to evaluate the writing situation for particular documents? Gather and analyze some sample documents to find out. Focus on aspects that make it easier to think about the different angles of the communication situation as well as on those features that the triangle does *not* allow you to think about.

A second drawback to the communication triangle is that it encourages us to think that these different angles (writer, reader, text, and reality) are separate—that, for example, newspaper reports describe reality but do not try to persuade
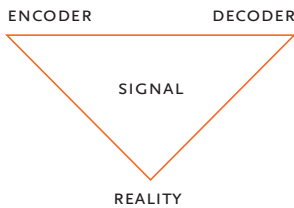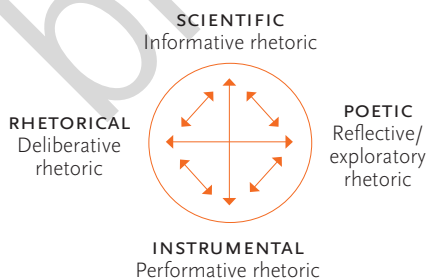

FIGURE 1.1

Kinneavy's communication triangle.

Source: James L. Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse *(New York: Norton, 1971), 61. Reprinted with permission.*

FIGURE 1.2

Beale's model of communication.

Source: Walter H. Beale, A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric *(Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987), 114. Reprinted with permission.*

readers to adopt a perspective on the topic. The point is that rhetorical genres often—maybe always—overlap. A better way to show this overlapping is demonstrated in Figure 1.2.

You will notice that Beale's categories for writing differ from those of the communication triangle. He discusses the purpose or aim of different types of writing. He focuses on aim to highlight the relationships created between the writer, the reader, reality, and the text in each type of writing. For example, poetic writing (or discourse) relates to the writer and enables the writer's self-expression or self-exploration. Readers read poetic (or literary) discourse to explore writers' personal visions. In contrast, writers of instrumental discourse link readers and reality: they provide information to help readers perform a particular action. This type of document becomes a tool to accomplish an action. Writers of rhetorical discourse aim to persuade readers—to change their minds about a particular issue or belief (or at least prompt them to consider the writer's viewpoint, even briefly). And, finally, writers of scientific discourse seek to relate readers to reality differently from writers of instrumental discourse, by informing and educating readers about complex technical ideas.

Notice the arrows on Beale's diagram: they indicate that a text—a newspaper report, for example—can sometimes have dual aims. It may *inform* you about some event while also trying to *persuade* you to condemn or applaud those events. In fact, some people argue that it is impossible for a piece of writing to have only one function. This view raises the possibility that every piece of writing does double work. For example, as a consumer, when you compare the assembly instructions for two different brands of bookshelves, you may decide to buy the one that presents the process as easy and pleasant (a persuasive goal) as well as clearly showing you how to do it (the instrumental goal). The instructions may start with a paragraph that describes the innovative features of the bookshelf design (informational and persuasive goals), while also including a list of tools you need for the assembly (an informational goal). How many different types of goals can you identify in several different writing samples?

NOTE ON CREATIVE VS. TECHNICAL WRITING

Many people who don't know much about technical communication beyond their experience as a user struggling with poorly written assembly instructions or a badly organized appliance manual view technical communication as dull and uninspiring. When asked about it, they often contrast technical writing with creative or fiction writing. They think of the latter category as innovative, imaginative, and artistic, while they consider technical writing to be dry and unimaginative. And poorly done technical

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IN-CLASS EXERCISE 1.1

Applying the Communication Triangle to Sample Documents

Assemble a collection of documents, some that are examples of technical communication and others that are examples of professional or business communication. For example, here is a selection of possible documents:

- the user's manual for an appliance such as a toaster oven
- a flier that arrived in your junk mail recently
- the installation guide that came with the mini-blinds (or other DIY product)
- a brochure that you picked up in the grocery store or the doctor's office
- a letter from a non-profit organization asking for donations
- the bill from your phone

Now, analyze your collection of documents individually from the perspective of the communication triangle:

- Who is the writer?
- Who is the intended reader?
- What are the purposes of the document?
- What form does the document take?
- In what way does the content of the document represent reality?
- What characteristics do these documents share?
- What limitations do you see to the communication triangle as you seek to apply it to the selection of documents that you collected?

IN-CLASS EXERCISE 1.2

Analyzing Documents with Multiple Aims

Assemble a second collection of documents that includes a broader range of sample documents: add a short story or poem; a newspaper article; a magazine article; a set of instructions; a business letter or two; some advertising fliers or brochures; a scientific report, if you have one; a magazine or newspaper editorial; a business form, questionnaire, or bill. Study these different types of documents from the perspective of Beale's model, illustrated in Figure 1.2.

- What is the main purpose or aim (i.e., rhetorical, scientific, poetic, or instrumental) of the document?
- What kinds of secondary aims does it have?
- Which other categories might it also fit well into?
- How easy is it to assign a primary category to each document?
- What kinds of documents make it difficult to determine a primary aim or purpose?

writing can be all of these negatives—and more. But effective technical communication can be innovative, imaginative, artistic—in a word: creative.

Often, technical writers get to use a product before anyone else, and they are challenged with the job of creating documentation that enables others to use this product quickly and easily. The writer decides on a useful format and medium; figures out how best to illustrate the product, when visuals would be helpful; designs a page layout that will make the process or the product attractive and easy to use; and produces text that is clear, unambiguous, and easy to read. While producing such prose is not usually introspective, the way that journal or novel writing might be, it is still an intriguing and creative process, a process that will change people's lives in small but significant ways. When users understand the basics of how to use a machine or computer program, they can move toward greater skill and more opportunities to take on new challenges. The technical writer becomes a partner in this process, helping users to develop and improve their knowledge and skill.

MEDIUM: WHEN DOES THE MEDIUM USED FOR COMMUNICATION CHANGE IT SUBSTANTIALLY?

Recent work on theories of how documents fulfill communicative goals sees each document as part of a network of related documents, people, and systems. Spinuzzi argues that the meaning of a particular document—and the purpose it serves—depends on its relationship with other documents already in the

FIGURE 1.3

The network as model of communication contexts.

network and on how various networks circulate knowledge and information.[1] Johnson-Eilola suggests that the image of a datacloud captures the complexity, depth, and obscurity of the systems we use to exchange information online.[2] Figure 1.3 suggests how documents, people, and networks (physical and social) all combine to create the context for today's technical communications. One way to think about this is to consider the interactions between documents reviewing a new song posted to a band's website; the reviews of that song on various social media websites; and information about the song on a radio station website. Some even argue that the reputation or value of the song or document rests more with the online commentary of users/listeners than with the intentions of the author of a technical communication document. Swarts argues that the role of the technical communicator should now focus on how to coordinate and cultivate user communities that themselves generate knowledge, processes, and strategies for other users.[3]

1 Clay Spinuzzi, *Network: Theorizing Knowledge Work in Telecommunications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

2 Johndan Johnson-Eilola, *Datacloud: Toward a New Theory of Online Work* (Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005).

3 Jason Swarts, *Wicked, Incomplete, and Uncertain: User Support in the Wild and the Role of Technical Communication* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2018).

AUDIENCE

WHO USES TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS?

In technical communication, it is more accurate to think of your reader as a "user" rather than as a member of a live audience. Originally, "audience" was a metaphor, taken from theatre and referring to the people who observe a performance. Today's viewers of online videos can leave comments, "like" videos, and rate them as ways to provide feedback. Similar feedback opportunities occur on ecommerce sites and on sites that provide recommendations for restaurants and various services. Today, most online help systems ask for this kind of feedback. Users are active participants in the performance of the technical communication text: they have become much closer to the actors' role than the audience's role because they make the writer's words live by using them to do something, instead of just passively observing. If you think of your readers as an audience at all, think of them as a raucous one.

Technical communication users are also very different from the types of readers you will address for school-related assignments. Professors and instructors in post-secondary education dutifully read every word that you write. Not so in the workplace. In fact, much of the text that you write in the workplace will be skimmed, not read, because readers' goals are different. Teachers read to evaluate the quality of the prose and the insightfulness of the ideas. While workplace readers may also evaluate these elements in passing, these readers are far more focused on other concerns as they interact with your document—for example, how to accomplish a task, where to locate information necessary to make a decision, or how to identify potential solutions to a problem. In fact, the parts of a technical report in the workplace

Analyzing Online Communications

Assemble a third collection of documents, this time drawn from online sources. Include user reviews from websites, questions and responses from online help communities, and website documents that also exist as PDF print documents. Examine the online context for these communications.

- Who answers questions that users pose in a forum?
- Is the forum moderated?
- How does the forum indicate or mark expert respondents?
- Do the PDF documents replicate the audience and power relationships of the print documents?
- Are the PDF documents referred to in the forums?
- What role do visuals and/or videos play in online contexts?
- When do videos assume priority or prime responsibility for communication, and when do they play a secondary role?

that receive the most focused reader attention include the executive summary (a summary of the key points in the report), the introduction, and the conclusion. Even these parts are generally skimmed rather than read closely. The body of the report often receives fractionally more attention than the appendices of a report. Because they are often glanced over rather than read closely, technical documents work most effectively when they present information in ways that aid skimming, for example, the use of bulleted lists; the repetition of key ideas (in the letter of transmittal, the summary, the conclusions); or the use of bold or colored typefaces to highlight key points. While no one may pore over your texts in the workplace the way that they do in post-secondary institutions, you are still expected to put extensive effort and care into all aspects of the technical documentation you create. Readers in the workplace will judge your competency and intelligence based on their perceived professionalism of the documents that you produce as part of your employment.

Another way in which readers or users of technical communication differ from the audience for other types of writing is that they are rarely "general," as in a "general audience." In fact, technical communication that addresses a "general audience" is usually poor writing, poor because it assumes that all users have the same level of knowledge about the subject matter, the same background and experience, the same attitude toward the information that they are learning, and so on. One way to visualize the critical differences among users of technical communication is to imagine yourself as a new employee for a roofing company. If you have never laid shingles before, on your first day of work when a co-worker points out to you that the first layer of shingles must be laid backwards—that is, with the unnotched edge laid parallel to the edge of the roof—you will be relieved and grateful to hear this tip. However, after you have been roofing for several months, such a "tip" will irritate you because you have laid the first row many times. Such basic information was essential when you were a novice roofer; it is unnecessary when you are an experienced roofer.

The same situation applies in technical communication: experienced or advanced users reject instructions that provide information that they already know. They do not want to sift through material to find nuggets of new information. Similarly, first-time users become frustrated and angry with instructions that omit the most basic steps—for example, to hit the enter key after selecting a particular command. They lack the experience to add the step that is obvious to everyone else. Users' needs vary widely, making broadly targeted technical documentation of limited use to everyone. The challenge for technical writers becomes finding ways to help users sort through information to find what they are looking for.

WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT USERS

Before we consider specific users, here are some ways to think about how to group users. For example, if you are writing a users' guide on how to create cascading style sheets in Adobe® Creative Suite® software, think about who might open this guide and why. Obviously, anyone who owns a copy of Dreamweaver® and

who wants to create a cascading style sheet would use this guide. And this kind of person could very likely be your **PRIMARY AUDIENCE**—that is, the group of users that you expect to choose your guide to create the style sheet. Your primary audience is the major group of users who will use your instructions. To create the style sheet, they will fulfill your purpose in creating the guide—to show somewhat experienced users of Dreamweaver how to use this advanced function.

Is this the only group who may use your guide? Actually, there are other users who also may consult your guide. For example, someone who has created style sheets in the past but may not have done so in several months: this user might open your guide to refresh their memory on getting started. Rather than following step-by-step through your instructions, he or she may skim the guide, noting forgotten details. This user—an expert—will form a **SECONDARY AUDIENCE** for the guide when using it as a reference, not a how-to document. These secondary users have a different level of knowledge than do your primary users, but they may still consult your guide.

Three other groups may also use or affect the use of your guide. When you are first assigned the project, your boss (or, in class, your instructor) becomes an **INITIAL AUDIENCE**—the individual who will approve your project, affecting whether or not your guide reaches the primary audience. A fourth group that may affect whether your project reaches its primary user is the **GATEKEEPER AUDIENCE**. This individual is often a supervisor higher up in the organization who will give final approval on your guide, that is, decide whether to publish it. The gatekeeper audience might give feedback about how the guide should contribute to the organization's image, feedback that could result in revisions to its style or arrangement. This supervisor may shape the document without using it or learning the process that you teach.

A fifth group that could affect your document is the **WATCHDOG AUDIENCE**. The watchdog audience might be a government or regulatory organization unconnected with you directly but that reviews the products that your organization creates. This type of audience may not have the power to prevent or promote publication of your guide, but its members' comments may affect your employer's reputation. For example, your guide may fit its target audience well; reviewers might post glowing reviews about your guide on amazon.com or indigo.ca, resulting in dramatic increases in sales and attention and imitation from other technical writers. Through its evaluation and approval, this watchdog audience might propel your guide to the new industry standard.

While you may have to negotiate through the initial and gatekeeper audiences as you develop your guide, the main group that will shape its details and organization will be your primary users. Their background knowledge and expertise will drive your design decisions and the level of detail provided in your instructions. The big question then becomes, "How do I learn what I need to know about my primary users?"

IN-CLASS EXERCISE 1.4

Analyzing Multiple Audiences for Documents

To help you imagine how these five categories of audience might respond in different ways to a single document, think about all the different people who might come in contact with your LinkedIn profile that you send as part of your application for a particular position.

- Of the individuals who look at your profile as that link gets passed along through the organization, which category would each person fit into?
- What would each person think about or be interested in as he or she reads your profile?
- Of these different readers, which would have the most and the least authority to offer you an interview?
- After thinking about who will see your profile and for what purpose, what changes might you make to reach these different audiences more effectively?

HOW DO YOU LEARN ABOUT YOUR USERS?

Here are several strategies to help you learn about the users targeted by your technical document:

- Take an inventory of what you do know about your target user group
- Create a profile of the characteristics that distinguish your target user from other types of users
- Interview individuals who fit into your user profile
- Observe individuals who fit your profile using similar types of documents
- Analyze earlier versions of the document to assess how the user had been characterized and note changes, notable strategic choices made by earlier technical communicators, and mismatches with your user profile

Of these strategies, some are more accurate and valuable than others: interviewing members of your target user group is most valuable because you can ask questions; receive valid feedback; and test assumptions about user preferences, approaches, and understanding. Taking an inventory of what you already know about your users can be reliable or not, depending upon your previous experience and knowledge. If you have already conducted interviews and observations of representative members of your user group for an earlier version or similar document, your inventory will likely be most reliable.

To build an inventory of the characteristics that you know about your primary audience, consider these factors:

- Level of experience with the subject matter
- Educational background, both generally and specifically, as related to your topic
- Experience with and attitude toward learning new things
- Experience with and attitude toward technology generally and your topic specifically
- Relevant demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, socio-economic background or class, culture, and first language

If you do not have information about many of the points above, you will need to do some research to find out where your primary users fall in the spectrum of these different factors.

Interview Users

You can interview representative users to find out about attitudes and levels of expertise. Simultaneously, you can gather information about their preferences for the design and arrangement of instructional information, details that will be useful when you reach the design stage of the project.

Observe Users

Another way to learn about how users use technical documents is to observe them as they use a similar product. This activity resembles a usability test, but it aims to collect general information about the patterns of use of instructional (or other) types of documents.

Interview Experts

If you cannot gain access to representative users, an alternate strategy is to talk to co-workers, fellow technical writers, or knowledgeable peers who will share information with you. When interviewing them, you can test your assumptions about your users against their knowledge and experience. While this option isn't as reliable as talking to actual primary users, it is more effective than guessing.

Create User Profiles

Once you have gathered an inventory of information, use it to create user profiles. User profiles are concise sketches of specific individuals who share characteristics of your primary or target user group. Spend five or ten minutes generating a series of profiles of specific (invented) people who represent various viewpoints from your primary users. See Figure 1.4 for two profiles of potential users for the guide to creating style sheets discussed above.

Develop these profiles to help you think specifically about your users: to consider their attitudes and see them as real people who interact with the text that you will develop. When deciding on specific design or organizational choices for your project, you can make better decisions if you have a concrete idea of who will use this document.

> **IN-CLASS EXERCISE 1.5**
>
> **Write a User Profile**
> Write a user profile of yourself as a reader of this chapter. Include whatever demographics you think are relevant, as well as personal characteristics that affect your reading and reception of the information in this chapter.

> **SAMPLE PROFILES**
>
> **Gina**: 50-year-old administrative assistant, BA in history in 1992; self-taught software programs including Word®, PowerPoint®, and Excel®; makes minor changes to department's web pages on Internet to update announcements, etc.; basic user of Dreamweaver but eager to learn more. Ambitious and not afraid of technology.
>
> **Karl**: 27-year-old financial analyst, MBA in 2019; proficient user of various web-based software; owns a small consulting firm supported by website; paid consultant to develop website for him two years ago, but now needs to update it; wants to do this himself. Novice user of Dreamweaver. Concerned about whether he can make the changes that he needs to by himself.

FIGURE 1.4
Sample user profiles.

REACHING YOUR PRIMARY USERS

One way to identify useful strategies for reaching primary users is to look at what other writers have done. Through the choices they make in designing and organizing their information, they illustrate the assumptions they have made about the needs and interests of their users. Lab assignment 1.1 will give you a chance to look at the ways in which several web designers have adapted their information to what they perceive as the needs of their target users. As you explore the different websites, think about which strategies might be useful in your writing.

LAB ASSIGNMENT 1.1

CHARACTERIZING YOUR USERS (AND YOURSELF)

Choose your own favorite website (or find statistics for your Twitter or other social media pages) plus one of the websites listed below, and explore these sites. Using the questions that follow, try to figure out what assumptions the content developers are making about their users' needs. See if you can develop a profile of the type of user that each of the websites addresses through its content and presentation.

a. http://www.tms.org/
b. http://www.useit.com
c. http://www.guinness.com
d. https://pbskids.org/
e. http://www.royal.gov.uk

Generating Ideas for Your Profile

- Who do you think is visiting this website?
- What special characteristics do they have?
- What is their background in the subject matter?
- What attitude toward or level of interest do the site designers assume the user has in the subject?
- Why do you think users will come to this website?
- What tasks might users perform based on the information in this website?
- What legal issues did the website designers have to address regarding this subject matter?
- Is the content of the website directed at a cross-cultural audience? How can you tell?
- What level of technical knowledge does the website assume in the reader/user? How can you tell?

Creating a User Profile for Each Website

Write a paragraph or two about each website in which you create a description of the target users implied in the answers to these questions. Try to include as many different topics as you can to help yourself think about ways in which the users may be different or similar.

Strategies for Reaching Target Users

Now compare the general descriptions using these questions to get started:

- Based on your analysis of these websites, what are four or five ways that users may differ from one another?
- How do these differences affect the kind of information that is included in the writing prepared for them?
- How do these differences affect the visual presentation of the information?

Gathering Analytic Data for Your Websites

If you have Facebook®, LinkedIn®, Twitter, or other social media pages (or your own website), identify what data those companies provide to you as a user. For instance, they usually provide some data about how many connections you have to other users and about your activity on the site.

- Based on what these sites show you, develop a profile of yourself that spans your social media presence.
- What information do you not know but would like to know about who reviews your social media presence?
- Develop strategies to curate or select how you want to be seen on social media: do you want to be seen as a "professional"? family person? fun-loving and idiosyncratic individual?

PURPOSE: WHY ARE YOU WRITING?

Another essential component of the writing situation, besides audience, is purpose or aim: what do you hope to achieve through creating your document? You may have one main purpose or several important goals that you want your user to understand after reading your document. For example, in a memo to co-workers, you might want them to learn that they have one month to review their benefits selections and make any changes they want. The goal of your memo will be fourfold:

1. to get them to read your memo and understand it,
2. to persuade them to review the attached booklet (or visit the informational web page) that outlines their possible choices,
3. to motivate them to act further by making any changes they want, and
4. to do all this before the deadline (e.g., March 31).

You may notice in the previous goals that persuasion and motivation figure centrally in the purpose for writing the memo. If your readers are uninterested in the subject of your memo or they consider themselves too busy to bother with this activity right now (as they meet an important project deadline), they may ignore your message without even skimming it. One of the main rhetorical challenges of this assignment may be to grab readers' attention; another challenge may be to get them to think about their benefits and to make changes to their current selections.

Perhaps you are preparing a report for a client after inspecting the home upon which they have made an offer, conditional on your certifying that it has no major structural flaws. Because the inspection took several hours and you are charging the client $400 for the activity, you want the report to be significant enough to reflect both the cost of the inspection and the care with which you conducted it. Therefore, one of your purposes is to demonstrate that you did inspect the property carefully. A second purpose is to show that you have identified any possible problems with the property. A third purpose is to inform the potential homeowner of where the problems lie so that he or she can decide to either remove the condition or withdraw the offer. Finally, you want your client to be satisfied that the cost of your inspection was a worthwhile expenditure.

Clearly, the writer's reasons for composing a particular document are often complex and multiple. One goal that often characterizes technical documentation is education, its primary purpose being to instruct the reader or user. After all, that is why many of us consult instructions or user manuals—to figure out how to operate a new device or use a software program. And, although instruction may be the primary goal of many technical documents, most texts will also have secondary goals: to inform, to satisfy, to please, to persuade, and so on. The documents that support technological developments also foster good or ill feeling in the target user groups. Technical documents that instruct users quickly

and painlessly in how to accomplish the tasks available using the associated product can only foster goodwill, increasing users' desires to try the company's other products based on the positive experience with this one.

HEARING BACK FROM YOUR USERS: RATINGS AND REVIEWS

Technical communication in the social media age benefits from the feedback on documents, videos, and other technical communication products we create. The reviews of the *Strategic Guide to Technical Communication* on Amazon.com, for instance, were helpful to us as we created this book. As instructors, we get reviews of our teaching through student course evaluation feedback at the end of the course. Some students also provide feedback on other social media sites such as Rate My Professor. Twitter provides feedback through comments on a tweet, retweets, likes, and direct messages. LinkedIn provides feedback through likes, comments, and shares. Facebook provides an "Activity Log" that includes likes, comments, and many other indicators of your level of engagement with the platform such as "Others' post to your timeline." Our website (wecanwrite. ca) tells us how many unique visitors came to the site, how many pages they visited, how these numbers have changed over time, and more. The podcast site (https://rogergraves.podomatic.com/) provides details on how many times each episode of the podcast has been listened to, what country listeners come from, how many plays came on mobile devices, and how that podcast compares with other podcasts on higher education topics.

As a consumer, you may have used various sites that provide reviews of products and services, from restaurants and travel-related services to just about any service you can imagine. These sites provide a forum or place for users to give feedback. For technical support documents, comments and feedback about how to perform a task can be posted on discussion forums such as Reddit. As a technical communicator, you want to enable and encourage reviews and feedback from users. You might even consider moderating a user forum so that users can provide feedback and help to each other and so that someone from your organization can respond to requests for help.

WHAT IS GENRE?

The word "genre" was originally a descriptive term classifying documents into neutral groups such as resume, technical report, or user manual. Over the past twenty years, scholarship in the area has led to a more accurate and perceptive definition. In *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*, Anis Bawarshi defines genre as "typified rhetorical strategies communicants use to recognize, organize, and act in all kinds of situations."[4] This definition underscores the characteristics of genre: the structural and rhetorical conventions (i.e., "typified ... strategies"), the organization and presentation of content, and the goals and function of the genre. Genres are used to accomplish actions, and, by selecting one genre over

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4   Anis Bawarshi, *Genre and the Invention of the Writer* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003), 17.

LAB ASSIGNMENT 1.2

LINKING PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Select a document that you've written recently (for example, a job application letter, a report, an essay, a letter, an email message), and reflect on the audience and purpose for this document. Then write several paragraphs answering the following questions:

- Who was your primary reader?
- Did you consider other possible readers? Who were they?
- What did you know about the primary and other readers when you began writing?
- Were you aware of one primary purpose or goal that you were trying to reach with this writing?
- What other goals do you see that you also had in drafting this document?
- What rhetorical or writing strategies did you use to achieve your goals for writing?
- Can you think of other strategies that you might have used to be even more successful in reaching your goals?

another, writers convey specific information that immediately helps readers to understand the purpose of the document. As a student, you are already familiar with the genres of academic writing: summaries, essays, examinations, and other types of papers that rehearse what you've learned and display your understanding of course subject matter and concepts. In academic settings, the specific characteristics of these genres can vary. For example, many instructors distribute an assignment that lists the specific criteria they expect for an essay assignment (use headings, a particular typeface and font size, cite no more than four secondary sources, etc.), and, as you move from discipline to discipline, minor aspects may vary regarding what constitutes an essay. Some minor variations also exist in workplace genres as you move from one organization to another.

STRUCTURAL CONVENTIONS

Each genre has a different structure that reflects what writers are trying to accomplish in using that particular genre. For example, the text in Figure 1.4 is immediately recognizable (even for readers who do not cook) as a standard genre used to instruct people in preparing food: a recipe or instructions for cooking a dish. The list of ingredients, the headings, the numbered steps—these visual elements of the structure of the text signal to readers that this process pertains to food preparation. When readers see the structural elements of a particular genre, they anticipate the specific content associated with that genre structure before they begin reading. If the content does not match reader expectations based on the genre structure (the visual organization of the text), readers will be at least confused (and perhaps annoyed) by the writer's text. For example, Figure 1.5 uses the structure of the recipe genre, but it is not a recipe. Users who need a stew recipe may find Figure 1.5 amusing as a joke, but they may also be irritated at the confusion.

MARINATED PORTOBELLO MUSHROOMS

Marinade
1 tbsp chopped fresh basil
1 tsp chopped fresh garlic
2 tsp balsamic vinegar
2 tbsp olive oil
Sprinkle of freshly ground pepper and salt

Other Ingredients
Six portobello mushrooms
Feta cheese (enough to put some on each mushroom)

To Marinate Mushrooms:
1. Mix marinade at least two hours ahead.
2. Pour half of marinade into a large, flat dish (or a plastic bag).
3. Place mushrooms smooth side down on top of marinade.
4. Drizzle rest of marinade on top of mushrooms.
5. Refrigerate until needed.

To Cook Mushrooms
1. On a preheated barbecue (or on a broiler), grill mushrooms for about 3 minutes on each side.
2. Baste with marinade.
3. Turn stem side up.
4. Fill each cap with feta cheese to taste.
5. Cook for another 3 minutes.
6. Serve hot.

FIGURE 1.4
Example of the genre of recipe instructions.

ELEPHANT STEW

Ingredients
1 elephant
brown gravy
salt and pepper
2 rabbits (optional)

Directions
1. Cut elephant into bite-sized pieces. This should take about two months.
2. Cover with brown gravy.
3. Cook over kerosene fire about 4 weeks at 465 degrees F.

This will serve 3,800 people. If more are expected, 2 rabbits may be added, but do this *only if necessary*, as most people do not like to find a hare in their stew.

FIGURE 1.5
This text subverts the structural conventions of the recipe genre.

RHETORICAL CONVENTIONS

Each genre also has rhetorical conventions—that is, expected purposes or aims that the type of document will accomplish. A writer would never choose to present a business activity update in the form of a technical manual. Nor would a reader consult a manual to gain an activity update. Such a document would confuse the reader expecting to find instructions on how to convert a word-processing file to rich text format. Nor would a manager expect to find a set of instructions on creating rich text format in a subordinate's activity report on her monthly accomplishments. Rhetorically, activity reports document (or inform) and make the argument (or persuade) that the writer worked successfully on assigned tasks over a given time. Readers come to a progress report expecting to be updated on an employee's activities. Again, note that readers have expectations about the rhetorical purpose of a genre as well as about its structure. If a document does not meet its anticipated rhetorical conventions, it is a poor specimen of that genre. The text will not accomplish the action that it was intended to do.

ORGANIZATION AND PRESENTATION OF CONTENT

Not only do genres have structural and rhetorical conventions, they also have rules about how to organize and present the content they contain. Again, this point is about meeting reader and industry expectations, about presenting the content that readers expect in the order that they expect it for a given genre. For example, a technical report does not begin with the appendices or methods used to collect information but with a summary of the key information contained in the main body, as well as any conclusions and recommendations. The report proper begins with an introduction to the topic, outlines the project, describes the scope of the treatment of the topic, identifies how information was collected in researching the topic, and so on, ending with conclusions to the report and recommendations for supervisor action. The organization of material presented in the report follows an established and traditional order that writers use to aid readers in understanding the report's conclusions. When information appears where readers expect it, they can focus attention on the subject and think about the report's argument. As a writer in the workplace, you also make your own job easier if you follow the generic conventions for a document type. Because the organization and presentation are well established for these genres, you can focus your attention on the topic and your treatment of the ideas rather than on how best to convey the basic information to readers. Use a genre's conventions to present information where and how readers expect it.

GOALS AND FUNCTION OF THE GENRE

Each genre has a specific goal (or series of goals) and a function. In the workplace, genres generally aim to facilitate an activity or the promotion of a product. In contrast, academic genres generally have as their goal the demonstration of accomplishment: they demonstrate learning of a subject matter and knowledge competence. For example, essays (a genre staple of academic writing) demonstrate the writer's ability to construct a clear, well-supported argument about

an idea or concept. Instructors use them to assess what students have learned and how well an individual might be assembling a conceptual framework for the course material over the school term. From a student's perspective, the goal of this academic genre is to demonstrate an insightful and carefully researched discussion on a particular topic in the course's subject matter. A similar goal—demonstrating knowledge and competence—is also present in the academic genre of examinations and tests. In contrast, workplace genres do not have as a central goal the demonstration of writer competence. Rather, workplace genres aim to achieve action, either by consumers or employees. For example, the white paper or information report (a business genre vaguely resembling that of the academic essay) is a sales tool meant to inform potential consumers about the features and merits of a new product or service. The goal of a white paper is to describe clearly a new product to inform readers and convince them to own this product. Similarly, a genre such as the job application letter functions as a source of information and argument: writers detail their qualifications for a particular job opening and show readers how they are superior to other applicants for this position. The goal of a job application letter is to win an interview for the writer.

GENRE AND ACTIVITY SETS

One way to understand the role that genre plays in workplace, academic, and other types of writing is to consider the activities of an organization (or institution) centered around writing. For example, in education, the goal of learning is focused on taking courses, reading books and articles, listening to lectures, working on problems, and participating in discussions about the information you've learned through reading, listening, and thinking. Many of these activities culminate in the act of writing, either notes to yourself, formal assignments such as papers or exams, problem solutions, or a lab report or set of observations. Some of the writing associated with learning is evaluated, but some of it is self-motivated as a means of learning and understanding aspects and concepts central to the course material. As an experienced student, you are well versed in the activities associated with learning at educational institutions.

Workplaces resemble educational institutions in that they are also activity based, and many of the activities of business, either of a technical communicator, manager, engineer, or lab technician, take place through writing. When you arrive at a co-op or internship placement at a workplace organization, it may not be immediately clear how you can fit into the ongoing activities of your workplace or how you can contribute to these activities. One way to do this may be to participate in drafting all or part of the workplace documents that are generated as part of the organization's productivity. For example, engineers may develop a solution to a manufacturing problem, but, until they draft the report documenting the solution, it is not available to others in the organization. To contribute to the documents that ground an organization's activities, you need to understand the main genre categories that represent the work being done. Rarely do co-workers have the time or opportunity to explain to newcomers the distinguishing generic features of the various documents that ground the organization.

A better way to educate yourself is to explore the document genres archived in your organization. These examples can illustrate the range and characteristics of the types of documents produced in the past by members of your organization. You can study these examples to note features of the different genres to help you understand how the organization defines this genre in this situation. While these types of examples can be useful for indicating general features, be wary of using them as stylistic models for your own versions of such documents. These archived texts are not necessarily good examples of their type, so imitating them can put you in the position of replicating a poor marketing plan or a badly written progress report. Read them and analyze their features critically so that you can begin to separate the mandatory generic features from the poorly written content and organization (in some instances). If you are puzzled about whether a recurring feature is important or just replicated from earlier examples, you can ask your supervisor for input on a specific point. Co-workers are generally happy to help out with targeted questions that can be answered quickly whereas they don't have time to give you a twenty-minute overview on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular sample document. The following sections provide more information on how to analyze the characteristics of a genre that is new to you.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN GENRES OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION?

Technical writers expect to produce at least some of the following genres:

- Procedures or instructions
- Manuals
- Reports on technical subject matter
- Specifications
- Proposals
- Letters
- Memos
- Oral presentations

Of this list, the last four genres are broader than just technical communication: they are the primary genres of business and professional writing, and they are related to many of the main activities of business.

WHY DOES GENRE MATTER?

To be considered an educated and experienced professional in your field, you need to know about and be able to produce the principle genres of your field. If you understand the conventions of the genres that you need to write and you have mastered the ability to meet those conventions effectively, then you will be considered a "good" (and maybe even the best) writer of technical communication.

Once you understand and can use the conventions of a genre, you can focus on the writing itself, making the content and presentation as effective as possible. Understanding the basic generic conventions of how to structure instructions helps you to focus on the process of creating the text. Some important purposes of this text are to introduce you to the requirements of the basic genres of technical communication, to provide opportunities for you to practice these genres, and to enable you to build up a portfolio of samples of your best work, which will help you demonstrate your skills and abilities in this area so that you can develop your career options in the area of writing professionally.

HOW DOES ONE ANALYZE A NEW GENRE?

When you examine an unfamiliar genre for the first time, focus on these three aspects to identify its key features:

1. Style
2. Structure
3. Register

Style includes elements such as sentence length, kind, and complexity; word choice; and any use of figurative language such as metaphors. Structure refers to how information or content in a document or genre is organized: is it subdivided into sections? How long is each section? What type of content appears in each section? Register refers to the level of language used in the genre. Is it casual, informal, or formal? Does it use contractions (an indication of informality)? Does it use "I"? The goal of this analysis is to determine what work each paragraph is doing, starting with the introduction, and then assess the paragraphs to decide what each one contributes to the overall purpose of the document.

Analyzing Style

To study the prose style of a genre, collect several examples to ensure that you reach accurate conclusions about it. A stylistic analysis focuses on several features. Count the different elements in the document and calculate the average sentence length, paragraph length, and sentence type. Once you have finished

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SENTENCE VARIETY

- Simple sentences contain a subject + a verb (e.g., The solution defies belief).
- Compound sentences are two simple sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction (e.g., The solution defies belief, yet it is simple).
- Complex sentences contain a simple sentence (subject + verb) + at least one dependent clause, which also contains a subject and verb (e.g., When you think about it, the solution is simple).
- Compound-complex sentences contain a subject + verb + a dependent clause, as well as an additional simple sentence joined by a coordinating conjunction (e.g., When you think about it, the solution is simple, yet it defies belief).

counting the stylistic features and calculating percentages, examine the numbers to derive some generalizations about how these features are used in the samples. What patterns do you see emerging from the similarities? Use these patterns to imitate the style in your version of the genre.

Analyzing Structure

The second step to analyzing a genre to reproduce it is to examine its structure to determine how the information is organized and presented. One place to start is with what Charles Kostelnick calls the "supratextual" elements, meaning such things as the size of the document, its orientation (portrait or landscape), the type of cover (if any), the binding, and the paper or media of presentation. After assessing the outward qualities of the document, you next explore how the information is organized and presented in the main part of the genre sample. You are looking for such organizational markers as topic sentences, levels of headings, whether it contains chapters, the nature and location of summary information (e.g., an abstract, summary paragraphs at the end of major sections), and so on. Determine what kinds of introductory information are included in the document.

TOPIC SENTENCES

- Assess the use of topic sentences in this genre.

Does every paragraph have a topic sentence?

TRANSITIONAL ELEMENTS

- Locate the transitional phrases or elements that are used to move from one topic to the next.

What is the most common method used to change topics?

METHODS OF IDEA DEVELOPMENT

- Examine the patterns of organization used in the paragraphs.

Based on your analysis, which is the most popular method?

SUMMARY ELEMENTS

- Examine concluding sentences and paragraphs.

What methods are used to conclude a point or discussion?

ANALYZING REGISTER

The final step in analyzing a genre is to determine the register or "form of language customarily used in particular circumstances" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*). To make this analysis, you should examine the diction of your samples, paying special attention to the tone, level of language, and use of jargon or specialized language, because these are the main sources of information about register. If your analysis shows no use of contractions in your samples (no use of words such as "don't" or "we've"), it suggests that the register or customary level of language for this document is at the "formal" end of the scale.

JARGON, CONVERSATION, ERUDITION

- Count the number of words that are technical or jargon words.
- Count the number of words that are conversational or ordinary.
- Count the number of words that are academic or specialized.
- Calculate the percentage of these types of words against the total number.

What level of language is used in this document? (Is it highly technical? Is it conversational?)

TECHNICAL JARGON (JARGON AND ETHOS)

- Examine how the technical language and jargon is used in the document or genre.

When is jargon used in this type of document (e.g., to establish ethos or credibility of the subject matter; to address other specialists)?

TONE (VOICE/ETHOS OF KNOWLEDGEABLE FRIEND)— CONTRACTIONS AND DICTION

- Count the number of contractions used in the document.

What other techniques (other than using contractions) did the writer use to establish and maintain the level of formality?

Generate a list of the key features and conclusions that your analysis has produced that will be most useful for you as you begin to write your own version of this type of genre.

LAB ASSIGNMENT 1.3

ANALYZING A NEW GENRE

Select two sample documents from a genre that you have never written before. Apply the process of analysis outlined in this chapter to four or five paragraphs from the two samples. When you have completed analyzing the prose style, write a blog post reporting what your major conclusions are about the principal features of this genre. Address the post to your classmates to help them understand quickly the distinguishing characteristics of the genre that you analyzed. Submit your post to the electronic class site for your course as part of a discussion thread.

WHAT ARE GENRE SETS?

"Genre sets" are groups of documents that go together. Documents can "go together" in different ways. Genre sets can include documents that contain the same information but use different genres to address their audience and achieve their purpose. For example, Figures 1.6 and 1.7 form this type of set. Fig. 1.6 is a Quick Guide, a two-page document that briefly summarizes research on a topic, highlights conclusions, and offers three or four specific suggestions for action, and a few central sources for readers who want more information about the topic. The Quick Guide in Fig. 1.6 targets post-secondary instructors of academic writing and aims to coach them on how to respond to grammatical errors in their students' school assignments. Fig. 1.7 is a short article that informs readers about the content of a podcast on the same topic for the same audience but with a different purpose. Instead it aims to invite readers to listen to the podcast for more detailed information. Genre sets can also initiate specific sequences of documents. For example, if a software development firm publishes a request for proposals (**RFP**) to document a new program developed by their engineers, you, as an independent technical communicator, may respond with a proposal outlining your plan to create the manuals for the project. The RFP, the proposals that are written in response, and the documents that are created as a solution to the problem outlined in the RFP all make up a "genre set." In these genre sets, one initial document sets in motion the need for other documents to be written in response. The interrelation of these documents constitutes some of the important activities of a business organization.

Grammar and Errors in Student Writing

Roger Graves

What Does Writing Studies Research Say?

Bean (2011) offers an excellent summary of the research in writing studies regarding grammar. Perhaps the best place to start, however, is with Hartwell's definitions of grammar: Grammar 1 = native speaker's innate knowledge of their native tongue; Grammar 2 = linguistic sciences' descriptions of the way language works; Grammar 3 = linguistic etiquette/usage; Grammar 4 = school grammar; Grammar 5 = stylistic grammar.

Grammar 1 is known to all school-aged children and adults. Grammar 2 is a scientific model of Grammar 1, and it is not useful in learning Grammar 1 for native speakers of English. Grammar 3 is not grammar at all but usage. Grammar 4 is, in Hartwell's terms, "unconnected with anything remotely resembling literate adult behavior" (p. 364). Grammar 5, or style, can be taught either implicitly through extensive use of the language (one school of thought) or explicitly through the study of prose style (the other school of thought).

Clearly we cannot teach Grammar 1 or (unless we are teaching a linguistics course) Grammar 2. Grammar 3, or usage, and Grammar 5, style, is similarly outside of the usual focus for instructors in courses that are not focused on writing. Grammar 4, school grammar, has been the subject of hundreds of studies since 1900.

Pressure to teach grammar as a way to eliminate errors in student writing comes from assumptions about these grammars. As Connors and Lunsford (1988) showed, however, the rate of errors in student writing per 100 words has remained relatively constant over the last century at about two (345). In a survey of research into the various ways grammar has been taught over this period, Smith, Cheville, and Hillocks (2008) found that hundreds of studies of various methods of teaching traditional school grammar to improve the quality of student writing are at best ineffective. At worst, they take time away from strategies that do work to improve student writing (process approaches, genre approaches), and they also focus assessment on surface errors and correctness—two features of writing that are easier to identify and appear "objective." School systems create tests that focus on errors and correctness at the expense of audience and purpose, and the result is that students may be able to produce "clean" texts that communicate very little.

Where Do Errors Come From?

Research with student writers at the university level shows that they are capable of correcting the majority of errors they make. Many errors result from poor editing/proofreading proofreading (Haswell 1983, quoted in Bean p. 75), and Bartholomae showed how students self-correct when reading texts aloud (1980, quoted in Bean p. 75).

Mina Shaughnessy, working with open enrollment students at the City University of New York, showed how errors are best seen as failed attempts by student writers to grow and develop. Without these errors, those students would not try new prose structures and therefore not improve. She advocated that instructors look for patterns of errors in student writing, bring those patterns to the attention of the students, and then work to correct the underlying mistaken rule that students were applying.

Implications for Instructors

Bean points out that the number of student errors increases with the cognitive difficulty of the assignment (77). If instructors ask students to write in an unfamiliar genre, or ask them to create a large (20 page plus) assignment, they can expect the number of student errors to increase. Instructors can exacerbate the problem through their grading practices: while the best students benefit from having errors pointed out on their marked papers, for the rest of the class this practice demoralizes them and does the work of finding errors for them (Bean 78–9).

1. Structure your assignment deadlines and evaluation schemes to require students to proofread and edit their work.
2. Communicate to your students the specific kinds of errors that you find unacceptable.
3. Ignore or minimize the importance of "accent" errors in non-native speakers' written texts.
4. Focus your efforts on identifying patterns of errors in student writing, and work with students on correcting the incorrect rule they apply that generates the surface error.

Further Reading

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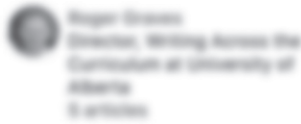
FIGURE 1.6
A Quick Guide summarizes research on a topic, conclusions, and recommends specific actions.
Source: https://cloudfront.ualberta.ca/-/media/centre-for-teaching-and-learning/wac/quick-guides/wacgrammarand errorsinstudentwriting.pdf.

Grammar: Grade it or not?

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For instructors who are not teaching a writing course, how much attention should they give to grammar errors and proficiency in student writing? In a business context, the issue presents itself differently, and I'll talk about that in a future podcast. For instructors at post-secondary institutions, though, this presents something of problem.

Students sometimes resent losing grades for grammar and punctuation errors because "this isn't an English course!" But for instructors who are aware that writing proficiency is part of the graduation outcomes for university degrees, not pointing out errors in grammar and punctuation can seem like they are not helping students achieve that important outcome. So what should they do?

In this podcast I review the research that explores how effective it is to teach grammar to native speakers of English at post-secondary schools. I then review the social issues around enforcing Standard Edited English before offering some positions instructors can take when they prepare rubrics or scoring guides to help them grade student work.

Figure 1.7
This short article invites readers to listen to a short discussion on teaching grammar as part of writing instruction.

MAJOR PROJECT 1.1

EVALUATING SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES (AKA PREPARING FOR THE JOB SEARCH)

An interesting example of a genre set is the overall impression created by an individual's social media platform. Each platform addresses a different kind of audience and creates a version of the account holder. When the versions are combined, you obtain an overall impression of that individual. If you conduct an Internet search of that individual, the locations and media where they have been tagged by friends and family members creates yet another dimension of the profile. What is the cumulative impression of all of these dimensions?

Part 1. For the first part of this project, choose a public figure who has a social media presence online. You can choose an athlete, a politician, a celebrity, an actor, a member of a royal family, etc. Investigate three or four of the platforms that this individual uses to create his or her presence. Analyze the material that is posted, and take notes of what you observe. Your goal is to compile a description of this public figure as represented in the materials that you analyze from the platforms that you visit. You may also include some information from other sites where that individual is tagged, if you want to also consider how he/she is represented through other people's postings.

1. Based on your research, prepare 5–10 slides on the social media profile of your selected public figure in which you present your findings (with evidence) and conclusions about him or her. Your audience for these slides is your classmates and instructor.
2. Post your slide deck on your class learning management system (LMS).
3. Review your classmates' postings and, as your instructor directs, either

   i) prepare several comments or follow-up questions about your classmates' findings to contribute to a class discussion, or
   ii) prepare a three-minute presentation to give in class based on your slides that summarizes your research and findings.

Part 2. Another example of a genre set is job application materials (that is, the position advertised, qualification application database, letter of application, resume, etc.). While a cover letter, resume, and references used to be employers' sole sources of information that allowed candidates to curate potential employers' impressions of them before an interview, social media now adds many complex layers of information. Employers now search numerous social media platforms to supplement any application materials to determine whether a candidate may be an appropriate "fit" for their organization.

In Part 2 of this project, aim to answer these questions:

- What does the social media profile say about the account holder as a potential job candidate?
- How should the account holder change this social media profile to improve his or her self-presentation as a desirable potential employee?

You have two choices for selecting a social media profile to analyze:

   i) you can analyze your own,
   ii) you can choose a partner in the class and analyze your partner's profile.

Your goal for this project is to analyze and evaluate a social media profile as a whole and to make recommendations about what changes should be made to each site to optimize the impression created through the materials posted there.

MAJOR PROJECT 1.1 (CONT.)

Here are some steps to follow:

1. List all of the apps used by the account holder and decide whether to look at all of them or choose only three or four.
2. Note the privacy settings for each account.
3. Investigate each account in detail, making sure you look at all the photographs, all the links or articles posted, comments, etc.
4. Take notes about specific details regarding all of the material that you look at.
5. Analyze the posted materials to assess what they tell you about the individual(s) depicted in each account.
6. Assess the conclusions that can be made about the account holder based on your analysis of the site content.
7. Evaluate the overall impression you have of the account holder based on all the sites and their postings.
8. Recommend three to five specific changes the account holder should make to the sites to ensure they represent themselves as a suitable/appropriate/outstanding potential employee.

When you complete your research and analysis and compile your findings, write a memo report addressed to your instructor (and your partner, if you are analyzing his/her profile) in which you present your findings and make specific recommendations as to how to improve/optimize how the account holder is characterized in the social media profile. Your report should include the following:

1. Describe the problem you addressed.
2. Describe how you solved the problem (describe which sites you visited, how you analyzed the information in each site, and how you drew conclusions based on your analysis).
3. Explain your conclusions.
4. Recommend three to five specific actions your client should take to optimize his/her characterization as a desirable potential employee.