

Call for Proposals:

Special Issue on “Achieving Professional Status for Our Field”

*Technical Communication*, the journal of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), is soliciting article proposals for an upcoming special issue that will examine current issues surrounding our struggle for professionalization. This special issue will be published in November 2011, and the guest editor is Nancy W. Coppola, New Jersey Institute of Technology.

#### SPECIAL ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Studies show that professions emerge in processes of struggle for market control and closure, for definition of a coherent body of knowledge, and for development of a professional history that will give the field a unifying identity. These ideological, economic and political processes for professional identity are already in play for technical communication – but are we there yet?

No one has articulated the issues and strategies for professional status in any meaningful way since Theresa Kynell-Hunt and Jerry Savage’s volumes *Power and Legitimacy in Technical Communication* in 2003 and 2004. No one has picked up a researched perspective of certification since Ken Rainey’s last work in 2004. Much of the discussion regarding professional status is now taking place sub rosa in conference hallways and on professional organization listservs.

Yet, exigency for examining professional status exists anew. STC is already developing two elements of professionalization: its certification program for practitioners, and sponsorship of a body of disciplinary knowledge for technical communication. Some scholars have argued against professionalization as an outdated or elitist path for legitimacy and status. However, all call for critical engagement of the full cultural, political, and sociological implications of professionalization.

This special issue of *Technical Communication* will provide an opportunity for public debate as it incorporates a range of contending perspectives and voices.

#### POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

The guest editor invites proposals for papers on applied research or theory, case histories/studies, tutorials, and/or annotated bibliographies that address these or other issues:

- Why should technical communicators attend to professionalization issues? Why not?
- Is professional status necessary or desirable? Why or why not?
- Who should set standards and minimum qualification for practice? How should the standards be established? Should the knowledge base be determined by experience of practitioners and/or academic research?
- What are the cultural, political, and sociological implications of professionalization?
- What does our history predict about professionalization?

- How can our professional organizations come together to create consensus for both academics and practitioners and build political support for professionalization?
- Should students in technical communication programs be taught how to be public advocates for their careers? If so, how?
- What can we learn from other professions that have achieved a professional identity?
- How can we resolve the contradiction of ethical practice for the good of society and elitism based on controlling knowledge and restricting access?
- What impact would professionalization have on academic programs and academics? Is accreditation of technical communication programs tied to certification? How?
- What might be the complementary research questions that could lead to a coherent body of knowledge?
- What can we learn from international organizations that have already set standards and established a code of good practices?
- What theories inform our authority and professional status? Is rhetoric the only model that we can apply to our role as professional?

#### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals should be no more than 400 words in length. All proposals should include submitter name, affiliation, and email address as well as a working title for the proposed article.

#### PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

The schedule for the special issue is as follows:

30 October 2010 – 400-word proposals due

30 November 2010 – Guest editor returns proposal decisions to submitters

15 February 2011 – Draft manuscripts of accepted proposals due

30 March 2011 – Guest editor returns reviewed manuscripts

16 May 2011 – Final manuscripts due

November 2011— Publication date of special issue

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Completed proposals or questions about either proposal topics or this special issue should be sent to Nancy Coppola at [coppola@njit.edu](mailto:coppola@njit.edu)