

Call for Proposals

Special Issue

Open Source Software and Technical Communication: Global Implications and Local Practices

The Journal of Technical Writing and Communication is soliciting article proposals for an upcoming special issue that will examine how open source software (OSS) is affecting technical communication processes and practices on local and international levels. This special issue will be published in the spring of 2011, and the guest editors are Kirk St. Amant of East Carolina University and Brian Ballentine of West Virginia University.

Special Issue Description

Software is a vital tool that is a central factor guiding the global information economy. Within this international context, open source software (OSS) is increasingly becoming a tool for consideration—if not a tool of choice—for many technical and professional communication practices and processes. The open nature of OSS development and the community-oriented approach to providing OSS support present new situations for organizations and individuals interested in using OSS products. Technical and professional communicators can benefit from an effective understanding of OSS and its uses. Moreover, the growing international use and diffusion of OSS for a variety of communication and technical tasks means an effective understanding of OSS can be key to professional success in today's global workplace. This special issue of the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* will examine what OSS is, how it is developed, how it is used, how it is supported (both technically and financially), and what OSS products populate the current global marketplace.

Possible Topics for this Special Issue

The guest editors invite proposals for papers on applied research or theory, case histories/studies, commentaries, teaching approaches, and/or annotated bibliographies that address the following issues:

- How are open source software and open source community practices changing the field of technical communication? How are they making the community and its practices more international in nature?

- What does the increased use of OSS in international outsourcing/offshoring practices mean for current and future practices in technical and professional communication?
- How will OSS use in industry and academia affect the nature of technical communication education? How will OSS affect conventional (face-to-face) and online approaches to technical communication education? How might it facilitate or lead to the internationalization of educational programs in technical communication?
- What legal and ethical issues—including copyright, licensing, and liability—need to be addressed when considering and using OSS products? How do OSS development and user support practices make these legal issues a matter of global concern, and what steps can be taken to address such international legal factors?
- Do technical communicators need a skill set upgrade to operate effectively in OSS environments? How do they get that upgrade? Or, do technical communicators need something more than what can be gained via conventional training?
- Does the use of OSS mean technical communicators and their employing organizations need to reevaluate their ideologies, especially in relation to concepts of shared work and ownership? How does operating in international contexts complicate this issue?
- How should technical communication instructors address OSS in the classroom? Should they be teaching OSS apps alongside proprietary apps or even in place of them? How do we justify doing so when many graduates of technical communication programs will be required to be proficient with proprietary apps?
- What OSS tools are in use in the field of technical communication on a local and a global level? In the various international industries in which technical communicators work? How well do they work? What are best local and international practices related to using OSS for technical communication tasks or for providing support for users?
- What can technical communicators bring to the international OSS community? There is a lot of documentation to write—is it being done? How effectively? What avenues are available for those interested in getting involved?

Submission Guidelines

Proposals should be no more than 500 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:

September 28, 2009—500-word proposals due

October 5, 2009—Guest editors return proposal decisions to submitters

January 15, 2010 —Draft manuscripts of accepted proposals due

April 15, 2010—Final manuscripts due

Spring 2011—Publication date of special issue

Contact Information

Completed proposals or questions about either proposal topics or this special issue should be sent to Kirk St. Amant and Brian Ballentine at jtwc.oss@gmail.com.