

The Pedagogical Missions of Professional and Technical Communication Programs: What We Say in the Journals and What We Say on the Web

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Abstract. This article examines the construction of the pedagogical missions of professional and technical communication (PTC) programs, focusing on two forms of professional discourse. Specifically, I look first at discussions and debates about our pedagogical missions in the internally directed or private conversations of scholarly journals. Then, I examine the externally directed or public discourse of 123 PTC program websites. To compare these two discourses, I frame their differences in terms of the *doxa*, or unspoken beliefs, upon which they ground their approaches to teaching students the *techné*, or principled practice, of PTC. The main conclusion of my study is that these differences reflect more than mere genre variations; they reflect important internal conflicts within the attitudes and perspectives on the role of PTC programs as sites of pedagogy. I conclude with the recommendation that we consciously resist the *doxa* that values pre-professionalism for its own sake by designing websites that refer directly to the topics and themes that arise in professional journals.

Keywords. professional communication, technical communication, program missions, pedagogy, *doxa*, *techné*

The purpose of this article is to examine the construction of the pedagogical missions of Professional and Technical Communication (PTC) programs in terms of two discourses: (1) scholarly journal articles, which represent the internal disciplinary conversations about PTC pedagogy, and (2) introductory statements on program websites, which represent their pedagogical missions to the outside world. As a PTC program administrator as well as the unofficial web designer for the English department in which I work, I am acutely aware of both the distinction between these two genres and the ways in which they combine to create public representations of PTC programs. To put my discussion into a broader rhetori-

cal context, I invoke the classical rhetorical notions of *techne* and *doxa*¹ to describe the ways these forms of discourse ground their beliefs about PTC practice (*techne*) in a specific belief system (*doxa*). The main conclusion of this study is that the differences between these two discourses reflect more than mere genre variations; they reflect significant internal conflicts within attitudes and perspectives about the role of PTC programs as sites of pedagogy. My purpose, therefore, is to raise awareness of these internal conflicts with the hope of generating discussion about the pedagogical missions of PTC programs. Specifically, my aim is to offer one way for us to reflect on what these program missions are and ought to be and how we present these missions to the public.

Why is this issue important? First, the difference between the two discourses is striking. As I show, what we say in PTC journals suggests a dynamic, stimulating image of the field. Even though job preparation is part of the mix, this private discourse—even just that portion addressing pedagogy—is rich with connections to classical and modern rhetorical theory, diverse conceptions of literacy, and critical perspectives on technology and culture. The picture is much different in the public discourse; by and large, degree programs are presented as sites of pre-professional training. Although it is expected that academic journal articles offer a layer of reflective discussion not appropriate for program websites, it is puzzling that the latter show so little of the richness in topics and perspectives found in the former.

Second, the striking differences between the two discourses reflect, I would suggest, a deep tension between two *doxa* upon which programs build the pedagogical discourse of PTC. On one hand, widely popular *doxa* holds that higher education is essentially a route to a job or career; in adherence to this perspective, we find little to question about presenting a public image of program missions that is unapologetically pre-professional. On the other hand, and somewhat ironically, when we turn inward and appeal to PTC's disciplinary *doxa*, we find just as little to question about problematizing the idea of pre-professionalism, both explicitly (by attacking the notion) and implicitly (by focusing attention elsewhere).

It would seem simple enough to say that these conflicting *doxa* do not present a contradiction because pedagogical missions are both pre-professional and much more. The problem, though, is that by continuing

¹ Both *techne* and *doxa* could take various forms as nouns in classical Greek, and both are used in various ways in modern literature. I am using *techne* primarily as an abstract, countable noun, as in “the *techne* of rhetoric” (singular) or “the *technai* of woodworking and shipbuilding” (plural). I am using *doxa* as an abstract mass noun akin to *opinion* in the phrase “public opinion.”

to present a version of program pedagogical missions to the public that is not only much simpler than the versions we foster among ourselves but also at times contrary, we may find ourselves unable to provide a coherent, generalized account of just what it is we're trying to do. To borrow Gerald J. Savage's (1996) phrase, we betray the conflict between programs' theoretical and pedagogical responsibilities, that is, between what we suggest our priorities are in journals and what we suggest they are on the Web.

Two Useful Terms from Classical Rhetoric: *Doxa* and *Techne*

The classical Greek terms I use—*doxa* and *techne*—merit some discussion. Taking the second term first, one of the key program missions is to impart a *techne* to students. A *techne* is a governed or principled practice that often results in a product of some kind, although the way the term is used in ancient Greek discourse changes and develops as discussions move from Homer to Plato to Aristotle, broadening in applications along the way (see Roochnik, 1996, pp. 17–88). Indeed, in the classical Greek context, Papillion reminds us that *techne* could refer to just about any “craft or ability to do something, a creative skill” either “mental or physical, positive or negative” (p. 149). Nevertheless, modern appropriations of the term tend to refer at least implicitly to Aristotle's (1990) definition in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: a *techne* is a practice that in “principle is in the producer and not the product... involving true reason concerned with production” (1140a; p. 89).² This practice, Janet M. Atwill (1998) explains, has three distinctive features: It is “never a static normative body of knowledge,” it “resists identification with a normative subject,” and it “marks a domain of intervention and invention” (p. 48).

If we think of PTC practice as a *techne*, then central to program missions is helping (and challenging) students to become masters, or at least effective wielders, of this *techne*. They should, to use Atwill's (1998) framework, understand that PTC is not just a finite set of skills, but a power or dynamics to get various work done; they should not only understand that this *techne* can be learned but also that teachers and practitioners continue to learn as circumstances change, and they should see that they can and should use their knowledge in fluid (but also recurring) situations.

Technai, as Frances J. Ranney (2005) puts it, are “habits of mind” (p. 20) and as such may be guided or influenced by both *episteme* and *doxa*. *Episteme* generally refers to explicit, theoretical, or justifiable knowledge, while

² Line numbers referring to the Greek passage come first, followed by the page number in the translation used here.

doxa generally refers to beliefs that are popular, but unspoken or unexamined. In ancient contexts, distinctions between the two are drawn in both epistemological and sociological terms. In Plato's (1997) *Crito*, for example, Socrates and Crito agree that only certain opinions or beliefs (*doxa*) are worth valuing—those reflecting the genuine knowledge or expertise (*episteme*) that only certain persons possess (47a–b; p. 41). Although Aristotle would not have disagreed with Plato on this basic epistemological point, his use of the term *endoxa*, referring more or less to *doxa* considered credible by the wise, reflects a fairly different perspective because Aristotle does not dismiss the value of opinion in the way that Plato does. In Aristotle's view, opinion may be useful knowledge, not just the illegitimate opposite of truth. The core arguments of Aristotle's (1991) *On Rhetoric*, for instance, draw on the *endoxa* represented by the common and special *topoi* (Haskins, 2004).

Because I aim to illustrate the extent to which program-mission discourses reflect a largely unspoken and unexamined commitment to two different beliefs about what constitutes their pedagogical dimension, *doxa* seems a more appropriate term for identifying these differences than *endoxa* (or *episteme*). In this way, my use of the term reflects that of recent theorists who have treated *doxa* as a constellation of the values-grounding beliefs we take for granted or about which we may not even be aware. The term's use in this context is closely related to ideology, but can also refer to notions such as "public opinion, verisimilitude, commonsense knowledge, commonplace, *idée reçue*, stereotype, cliché" (Amossy, 2002, p. 369).

In the realm of social theory, one of best known modern theorists of *doxa*, Pierre Bourdieu (1977), adapts the term to serve his theoretical explorations in sociology and anthropology. His definition focuses on the unspoken, unreflective aspect of *doxa*. For instance, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, he writes that

when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization... the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call *doxa*, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs. (p. 164)

Put another way, "*Doxa* is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, a pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense" (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 68). Bourdieu's focus on the "pre-verbal taking-for-granted" dimension of *doxa* is particularly relevant.

What I am suggesting is that in apparently being committed to two different, and possibly contradictory, versions of program pedagogical missions, we are in a condition of immediate adherence to two different *doxa*. This condition is problematic for two reasons. First, the contradiction itself hurts our credibility. If the *doxa* that makes us uneasy and sometimes righteously indignant in private discourse is the same *doxa* that we use publicly to advertise the goods programs offer (i.e., “PTC is all about job preparation”), then we are talking out of both sides of our mouths. Second, it suggests, perhaps, that we have not become secure enough as a discipline to present a truly self-aware, reflective, and consistent version of our program missions in both contexts.

Methodological Clarifications

Before moving any further, a few methodological clarifications are in order. First, to address the question of how to adequately capture both the internally and externally directed discourse on professional and technical communication pedagogy, I refer primarily to documents (paper or Web) that use such terms as *professional writing* and *technical communication*. Although professional and technical differ somewhat in their disciplinary connotations, they are commonly used together in academic programs. Moreover, in published literature, technical and professional have appeared side-by-side for over four decades (see, e.g., Estrin’s 1963 edited volume, *Technical and Professional Writing: A Practical Anthology*).

Second, my method for adducing evidence is largely an interpretive process of identifying representative statements in the texts of both scholarly articles and websites. Early in my study of these websites, I created a detailed coding scheme, but quickly discovered it would be more useful to adopt a flexible, open-ended method. I shifted to such an approach largely because a coded content analysis is more fine-grained than necessary; the statements I’ve counted as evidence tend to sort fairly neatly into relatively coarse thematic groupings while still adequately serving my investigative aims.

Third, the representative statements are limited to those programs with links listed on the websites of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW), the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC), and the Society for Technical Communication (STC). From these lists, I have limited my study to four-year universities granting at least bachelor’s degrees in the United States. However, I do include material from programs currently granting only minors or undergraduate certificates (but only if for credit) on the assumption that one key way in

which PTC programs pursue their pedagogical missions is by establishing more and higher degree programs. The point of using these criteria is to include as many sites as possible while keeping the scope of the project manageable. In total, I reviewed 123 college and university websites, each of which was accessed during February 2008. For my discussion of website texts, I quote no more than five representative statements, indicating contextually how prevalent the sentiments in the statement seem to be (as opposed, that is, to tabulating all of them). In addition, I refrain from mentioning schools by name to avoid any appearance of promoting or critiquing a particular program.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that my aim here is to draw reasonable conclusions from a reasonable comparison. One might argue, for instance, that journal articles and websites are apples and oranges and that differences among them are due largely to differences in their genres—that is, in their respective audiences, purposes, structures, and social functions. In response, I suggest genre differences alone do not account for what appear to be incompatible versions of our whole philosophical orientation as we move between these two discourses. Genre differences might account for a somewhat more practically oriented discourse online and a more theoretical one in journals, but as I mentioned previously and show later, the differences are simply too striking and consistent to suggest anything else other than an illustration of a deep, internal conflict within the pedagogical discourses of PTC programs.

Program Missions: What We Say in the Journals

If one central program mission is to help students become practitioners of a certain sort of *techne*, then the question arises as to what *techne* this is and what critical and productive knowledge we can expect students to demonstrate as a result of these efforts. With respect to these themes, what we say in journals is complex and multivocal. For example, we do acknowledge the importance of preparing students for work after college, but rarely proclaim that the *techne* of PTC ought to be essentially preparation for a particular job. In some cases, we critique such essentialization outright, and at the very least, we look for ways to augment it with humanistic or posthumanistic goals. In this section, I provide a brief survey of the various topics and themes that arise in professional journals when addressing, either directly or indirectly, the relationship between programmatic missions and pedagogical goals. This relationship includes not only the matter of pre-professionalism itself but also classical rhetoric, modern rhetorical theory (including imports from cultural theory and the social

sciences), concepts of literacy, service learning, and what might be called the pedagogy-practice gap. This brief survey of pedagogical approaches doesn't do full justice to their significance in pedagogy. A more in-depth discussion, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

Pre-professionalism Addressed Directly

First, it might be useful to look at academic discussions that address pre-professional preparation directly. The central question in this context is whether PTC pedagogy ought to be built on a framework that, in a sense, is already packaged and handed to us by employers, professions, the real world, and so forth (see, e.g., Casady & Wasson, 1994). For example, in a survey of ATTW members, David Dayton and Stephen A. Bernhardt (2003) collected responses about what instructors feel are the "most important skills for students to succeed as professionals" (p. 30). The two most frequent responses were "rhetoric" and "writing and editing," followed by "technology," "personal traits and work skills," "specialized expertise," "document design," and several others.

Few instructors would question the value of learning these skills, but the results do beg the question of why program missions should be constructed in terms of how we will help students succeed as professionals. The seemingly obvious rationale might be that program graduates will use their degrees to get jobs; so we are duty-bound to prepare them with the skills they will need to do so. But when that perspective is guided by the popular *doxa* about the meaning of a college degree, we leave ourselves open to questions about why we are following it in a seemingly uncritical way. Indeed, Jack Bushnell (1999) argues that the integrity of PTC programs is hurt more than helped by the pre-professional model:

We have, willingly or not, become training departments for corporate "clients" who provide us with internships and fellowships for our students, and ever increasing numbers of good-paying jobs for our graduates. In our eagerness to obtain real workplace experience for our young technical-writers-in-training, we don't challenge students' own strongly held faith in the corporate model as a goal, an end point, characterized by affirmation, stability, prosperity, and meaning. So, to the extent that we allow that narrative to be perpetuated in our classrooms, we also run the risk of failing to encourage questioning and critique as important, self-distinguishing professional and political acts. (pp. 175–176)

Stuart A. Selber (1994) addresses the problem Bushnell (1999) identifies by raising several questions about the sometimes inordinate attention to training

students to use technological tools. Based on a survey of PTC faculty, he found that the most frequent responses included a common-sense rationale (i.e., why wouldn't we?) and a marketability rationale (i.e., computers skills help you get and keep your job) (pp. 378–380). Given these results, Selber identifies several challenges associated with training in these skills: “balancing technological with literacy and humanistic concerns,” “re-envisioning our computer-related curricula” in light of these other concerns, and “educating teachers who use computers in their classrooms” about the pedagogical possibilities of new technologies (pp. 381–382). Following this observation some years later, Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart A. Selber (2001) argue for a pedagogical mission grounded in the cultivation of three practices: thinking, which “focuses on understanding technical communication from a theoretic perspective”; doing, which involves the production of examples of technical communication; and teaching, which should also be seen “as a primary activity of technical communication” (p. 410).

Classical and Modern Theories

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, some of the first works exploring connections between classical rhetoric and modern technical writing appeared (Rivers, 1994), such as those by Edward P. J. Corbett (1989), Rosemary L. Gates (1990), and John F. Reynolds (1992). A decade or so later, Tracy Bridgeford and Michael R. Moore (2002) edited a special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* on “*Techne* and Technical Communication” that included several articles on how *techne* can help animate the discussions not only of the programs’ pedagogical approaches (Dubinsky, 2002) but also the student’s learning process (Moeller & McAllister, 2002) as well as the general relationship between classical rhetoric and modern views of PTC (Gordon, 2002).

Beyond appropriating classical rhetoric, the uses of contemporary theoretical and conceptual frameworks are eclectic. Carl M. Whithaus and Joyce M. Neff (2006), for example, adopted a social constructionist framework for examining the use of video (interactive television and video streaming) in teaching an online course in management writing. Filipp Sapienza (2007) applied the poetic theories of Imagism and Acmeism to the discussion of single-sourcing. Andrew Mara (2006) adapts the charette, a method historically used in design and architecture schools, involving an intensive and collaborative problem-solving process to model technical communication situations. And activity theory, based on Russian psychological movements inspired by the work of Lev Vygotsky, plays a part in discussions about genre and pedagogy (Freedman & Adam, 2000; Kain & Wardell, 2005).

Forms of Literacy

Given the last few decades' interest in the concept of literacy from several angles—educational theory, social history, and rhetoric and communication—it's not surprising to see the idea explored and applied to discourse about the aims of PTC programs. Recent work has focused especially on the varieties of literacy we ought to cultivate in students. For example, Ed Nagelhout (1999) argued that introductory PTC courses should promote four kinds of literacy: rhetorical, visual, information, and computer.

Naghelout's argument, in his article, "Pre-Professional Practices in the Technical Writing Classroom," reinforced the notion that PTC pedagogy ought to aim primarily for pre-professional goals. However, literacy can mean more than simply the possession of knowledge and skills required to acclimate a person more efficiently to workplace discourses. Taking the multiple-literacies idea further, for example, Kelli Cargile Cook (2002) argued for not four but six types of literacy: basic literacy, "making appropriate reader-based decisions" (p. 9); rhetorical literacy, audience understanding and analysis as well as "awareness of one's own ideological stance as well as the audience's stance(s)" (p. 10); social literacy, understanding the social and cultural myths and practices within specific working environments (pp. 11–12); technological literacy (p. 13); ethical literacy (p. 15); and finally, critical literacy, "the ability to recognize and consider ideological stances and power structures and the willingness to take action to assist those in need" (p. 16).

Rhetorics of Technology

Associated with problems of technological literacy that Cargile Cook (2002) described are broader issues about technology's place in pedagogy and society in general, issues that might come under the heading of rhetorics of technology. Within the context of PTC program missions, a number of interesting discussions exist. For example, a special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* on "Computer Classrooms and Technical Communication Pedagogy" (Albers & Cargile Cook, 2002) includes articles on teachers' attitudes toward technology in the classroom (Selting, 2002) as well as how to put technology into a critical perspective (Breuch, 2002; Salvo, 2002). Not surprisingly, the globalization of communication networks has led to an interest in online education from both programmatic and theoretical perspectives (e.g., Paretto, McNair, & Holloway-Attaway, 2007; St. Amant, 2007). Others have discussed how to use concepts from technological development such as usability (Schneider, 2005) to enhance students' sense of the ways in which technical communication is socially situated.

Service Learning

Some PTC programs have been exploring the rich field of service learning, a mode of instruction that encourages students to apply their knowledge and skills to activities that help the local community. Additional work in this vein focuses on a wide variety of approaches, including those touching on themes of ethnography (e.g., Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999), cross-cultural outreach (e.g., Sapp & Crabtree, 2002), and engagement with nonprofit organizations (e.g., McEachern, 2001). At the heart of this form of service learning is a commitment to civic engagement (see special issue guest edited by James M. Dubinsky, 2002), which has been recognized not only in the scholarship but also in a recent textbook (Bowden & Scott, 2003) designed specifically for service learning courses in technical and professional communication (see also Scott, 2004).

The Pedagogy-Practice Gap

Over the years, an energetic discussion has emerged among instructors and program directors concerning a perceived gap between what students are taught in the classroom and what is demanded of them when they leave school to pursue careers. Indeed, at least one book-length study of the subject has been published (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999). This work resulted from a seven-year study of writing in these two different contexts:

It is largely in academic settings that writing calls attention to itself and, more often than not, is regarded in isolation from the larger social and communicative action to which it is so intrinsically bound. On the other hand, in non-academic workplace settings, writing is seldom regarded (when it is regarded at all) as apart from the goals, occasions, and contexts that engender writing. In these settings, writing is a means, a tool in accomplishing larger goals, which may involve actions other than writing and other participants who function in a variety of roles. It is just this kind of disjunction between academic and workplace settings that occasions the study from which this book derives. (p. xi)

The distinction Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré (1999) identify reflects a tension that goes back a long way. Donald H. Cunningham (2004) notes four practices that during the 1960s and 1970s kept the gap fairly wide: (1) literary texts were read as models of good writing in PTC classes, (2) students were expected to write on scientific and technical topics "in the form of literary essays," (3) no style textbooks were designed specifically for PTC genres, and (4) PTC classes were assigned "to just about anybody who was willing to teach them or who needed to have a class to fill out a teaching load for the term" (pp. 122–123).

It is unlikely that many students in PTC courses today encounter the same situation Cunningham (2004) described, but some would say that any perception at all of the pedagogy-practice gap is an illusion (e.g., Bushnell, 1999). It exists, the argument goes, only if we presume that PTC programs must attend to certain goals of pre-professional training and only if we presume that we know what those goals are. In other words, there is no reason to worry as long as we hold true to our ideals as educators in the tradition of the liberal arts.

This conclusion does not work for everyone, however, because it reflects deep questions in programmatic discussions about the role of pre-professional curricular approaches. Indeed, the sheer volume of texts on the pedagogy-practice distinction suggests that the perception of a significant gap or at least a tension is still widespread. Many of these distinctions offer various curricular suggestions as a way of closing the gap or resolving the tension. For example, Paul Meyer and Stephen A. Bernhardt (1997) argued that curricula should enculturate students into the forms of workplace literacy, and other scholars (e.g., Blakeslee, 2001; Hanson & Yee, 2001) offered proposals for courses and curricula that put students in contact with professional situations, in some cases (e.g., Bosley, 1992; Tovey, 2001) through the creation of alliances between academic programs and local industries.

Still others have attempted to address the pedagogy-practice gap by providing students with experiences simulating the professional setting. For example, Peter J. Hager (1990) argued for what he calls mini-internships on campus that provide students with the benefits of an internship, but with fewer of the costs of setting up a full-scale, off-campus program, and Lee-Ann K. Breuch (2001) discussed how to prepare students to work with clients, suggesting methods of “interviewing, listening, and seeking clarification” with what Ann M. Blakeslee (2001) called the “disorientation, frustration and double binds” students find themselves experiencing (p. 184; see also Kelly & Barnum, 1987; Zimmerman & Long, 1993).

With respect to PTC program missions, the extensive discussion of a perceived pedagogy-practice gap raises some important questions. Although many scholars believe the gap exists and work to close it, others seek to debunk the familiar dichotomy—that academia is one thing, and the “real world” is quite another. Gerald M. Parsons (1989), for example, has argued that referring to the real world as somehow divorced from academia hurts the field’s prestige in several ways—it degrades students’ academic work, it polarizes those who presume that a dichotomy exists as well as those who might not, and it is anti-intellectual because it implies that PTC scholarship is somehow disconnected from reality. Savage (1996) took up this theme as well, encouraging PTC instructors to seek alternative sites for students’ practice. Framing the problem more

simply, Patrick Moore (1997) argued that we miss the point in trying to see technical communication as rhetorical discourse, a viewpoint that he believes represents an academic myopia because from his perspective, it is better seen as instrumental discourse.

Pedagogical Missions: What We Say on the Web

Turning from internally directed to externally directed discourse, from private to public statements, most of the variety and complexity of the former is lost. Some shift is to be expected, of course, because scholarly and online statements are two distinct kinds of discourses: the aim of scholarly articles, in the context of discussions of PTC program missions, is to provide commentary among ourselves on conceptions of those missions; the aim of program websites, in contrast, is simply to state one mission or another to a broader public (if a mission is stated at all; in many cases, any larger pedagogical mission is only implied). As different as their audiences and immediate rhetorical aims may be, they both reflect, even if only implicitly, a collective and general sense of what should constitute PTC program goals. To put it in terms of *doxa*, both the journal article and the website are discourse forms sanctioned and ritualized by the community of instructors and program directors and both presumably would reflect the same set of values and assumptions—the same *doxa*—if produced by like-minded persons.

Comparing these two discourses is not, therefore, simply to identify formal differences in their textual structure or immediate audiences or purposes. The purpose, instead, is to identify the underlying *doxa* that seems to inform the conception of the *techne* of PTC in each forum and to comment upon these differences. To that end, the following section provides some data about PTC program sites and degree offerings, a brief survey of website texts in terms of the main topics and themes they reflect, and some additional discussion of the relationship between the language of the websites and the *doxa* their statements seem to represent.

PTC Program Sites and Degree Offerings

The majority of PTC programs are housed within English departments, although an increasing number have their own departments or are associated with other departments such as communication or business. Specifically, of the 123 websites examined (see complete list of schools in the Appendix), 68 PTC programs (about 55%) were clearly housed in departments of English. This number increases to 88, or just over 70%, when including programs in departments that, due to the school's nature and size, would typically be covered by an English department, along with other fields (e.g., Languages & Literatures or

Humanities). The remaining 25% are distributed into a variety of institutional quarters. The largest single group includes nine in departments of communication, followed by a handful of programs housed in colleges or schools in the arts and sciences, but not within a particular department. Among the rest, PTC programs are located in business and engineering schools, in departments of rhetoric and/or writing studies, in interdisciplinary configurations (e.g., as a joint venture of English and Communication departments), and in two cases, in their own departments.

PTC programs take a variety of forms and offer several degree options. I looked only at programs in four-year institutions that offer at least a bachelor's degree, although from among these I examined statements from programs offering just a bachelor's certificate because directors of these programs presumably may wish to develop more and higher degree offerings. Although I attempted to identify precisely each degree offering, some ambiguities exist. For example, at times it can be hard to tell whether a bachelor's degree is in English with a concentration in a variant of PTC or a full major in its own right. In general, unless it was clear that the degree was in PTC (or a variant) specifically, I assumed that the degree was in the major of its housing department (almost always English) and that the PTC variant was a concentration or emphasis (see Table 1).

Table 1. Breakdown of Offerings in Terms of Degree Level and Type

62 BA degrees	23 in English with an option, emphasis, or concentration 31 in a variant of PTC remainder (8) appear under a variety of names that, based on website descriptions, seem to be variants of PTC in terms of their curricula (e.g., Digital Technology and Culture, Rhetoric and Technical Writing, and Technical Journalism)
23 BS degrees	20 in a variant of PTC remainder (3) appear in closely aligned fields (e.g., Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication)
35 MA degrees	13 in English with an option, emphasis, or concentration remainder (22) appear in a variant of PTC
20 MS degrees	all appear in a variant of PTC

As one can see, BA and MA programs are preponderant, but many BS and MS programs exist. There were very few PhD programs distinctly in PTC. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the complex relationships among program offerings, curricula, and sites of institutional residence. However, my examination of program sites suggests the following

general trends. First, being situated in an English department did not seem to have any systematic influence on the curriculum offered. Second, the vast majority of bachelor's and master's programs, whether of arts or of science, were presented as pre-professional training grounds; BS and MS programs did not present themselves as especially more practical than their BA and MA counterparts. Finally, several MA programs presented themselves as both a terminal degree and as preparation for PhD work, so their goals might be seen as somewhat more complex than those of BA-only programs.

The Missions of PTC Programs

Because individual PTC program websites vary greatly in the type and amount of information they publish online, I found that using a flexible, open-ended method for adducing evidence was more useful than working up a fine-grained coding scheme. Web statements about PTC program missions are sorted into several thematic categories, as follows.

The Job-prep Mission

Not many program websites have a mission statement, but each of those examined had at least some description of general pedagogical goals. The vast majority of these mission statements refer directly, and almost exclusively, to the goal of preparing students for specific jobs or careers. It was not apparent that this goal approached the level of immersing students in an apprenticeship to a *techne* or what Donald A. Schön (1983) would call a reflective practice. Variants of this statement include those that mention training for specific jobs and careers and those reflecting the slightly different mission of helping students advance careers they already have. In some cases, too, the preparation involved is for work in academia. By far the most common statement at the BA and MA levels, turning up in nearly every program description in some form, refers simply to preparation for jobs, careers, or professional advancement in general, as illustrated in the following samples:

- Prepares students for careers as technical communicators in industry, business, government, and the non-profit sector [28]³;
- Will be prepared to enter a variety of careers in marketing, business, public relations, human resources, journalism, video production, and all levels and types of media work [39];
- Designed to teach students to write in industry, government, technology, and scientific disciplines [53];

³ Bracketed numbers refer to the listing of schools in the Appendix.

- Prepares students to be professional information developers, technical writers, and editors [59]; and
- Prepares you for a career in Web design, organizational Web management, online communication networks, and a wide variety of Internet applications in marketing, business, and education [105].

The career advancement variant is not common, but it does show up with some frequency, particularly when the program includes nontraditional, working students, as illustrated in these two representative statements:

- Designed for working adults who are employed or who are seeking employment in the field of technical communication, one of the fastest growing sectors in today's global, high-tech economy [22]; and
- Whether you're a traditional undergraduate or a mid-life career changer, our practical program provides both the basics and a range of choices—plus advising and lab policies to make the program work best for you [94].

The Theory-into-practice Mission

Although the dominant mission reflected in these online statements is one of job preparation as an end in itself, there are those that display an interest in a slightly richer conception of their mission. Several statements make the point that they promote connections between theory and practice, albeit usually with few specifics:

- Blends theory and practice in training students for careers in industry, teaching, and/or doctoral programs [17];
- Provides students with theoretical and applied knowledge in academic and professional/technical discourse [28]; and
- Based upon rhetorical theory and practical application, the courses develop competence in writing skill, computer use, basic genres, audience awareness, and visuals and layout [35].

The Counter-culture and the Integrated Humanist Missions

Programs with public statements reflecting a mission counter to the conventional one of pre-professional training typically take one of two approaches. A minority of program descriptions take a position directly against the pre-professional mission. These statements could be called the counter-culture programs:

- See technical communication as a humanistic discipline; that is, we approach it as a set of principles, tools, and practices that enable people to communicate with each other for mutual benefit [11]; and

- Distinctly not a pre-professional program, PWR prepares students to be more critically reflective, civically responsible communicators in their daily lives and, primarily, workplace contexts [29].

To the extent that a connection to the humanities or the liberal arts is said to ground a program otherwise oriented toward job preparation, something like an integrated humanist approach is used in a few cases. These programs do not necessarily take a stand against the dominant mission of pre-professional training, but instead ground this mission explicitly in the context of a humanities or liberal arts education:

- Although based firmly in the liberal arts tradition, the major has a strong career orientation and is specifically designed to prepare students for successful careers as writers and communications specialists in a range of fields [15];
- The minor is rhetorically focused, reflecting the professional communication field's humanistic roots (as appropriate for a program housed in the Department of English), yet it also addresses the needs of today's workplace [79]; and
- With its humanities based and interdisciplinary curriculum, the program provides students a foundation in technical communication, in theories of rhetoric, composition, literature, and in applications of information technology [107].

Popular *Doxa* and the Missions of PTC Programs

I have suggested that in light of this survey of the statements found in the externally directed discourse of PTC programs, the job-prep mission predominates with relatively few variants. However, there is more to the language of these program statements than the bits of text regarding their program goals. Indeed, across nearly all the program statements, an additional layer of language highlights the difference between what is said in academic journals and what is said on the Web. These additional statements further illustrate the degree to which program websites are dominated by popular *doxa* regarding their purpose in contrast to the nuanced and varied disciplinary *doxa* grounding academic journal articles. These statements can also be grouped into a handful of thematic categories.

Needs of the Job Market

First, numerous references to the needs or demands of the job market beg the question of what ought to constitute the *techne* of professional and technical communication, the possession of which would make it possible for graduates of a program to fill such needs or meet such demands. Rather,

this language is deployed as a way of enhancing the marketability of the credentials granted by the program:

- Designed to fill a workplace need for people who know how to communicate ideas clearly [9];
- Those who can offer an employer writing skills and an in-depth understanding of a particular subject are highly in demand [37];
- Today's marketplace needs individuals who can translate technical information into easy-to-understand language. This is the niche that the technical/professional communicator fills [47]; and
- Because of the growing demand for highly skilled, professionally competent writers in business, industry, and government, the student with training in writing, speaking, editing, and communication skills has improved job opportunities [104].

Statistics Show

Closely related to statements about market needs and demands are those that refer to statistical data or general trends in a way that establishes the desirability of the credentials their programs offer. Specifically, a rhetorical device valued highly in popular discourse about the value of a particular degree program—reference to statistical data purported to demonstrate the program's value in some way—is deployed for its presumed appeal to prospective students:

- According to current statistics, skilled working professionals spend the majority of their time communicating in one form or another: giving presentations in meetings, creating reports, corresponding with clients and peers, writing emails, and designing and writing manuals and other technical materials [3];
- [Technical communication is] a field which *US News and World Report* (1998) named one of the top 20 Hot Job Tracks in the country, and what *Newsweek* listed as among the top 100 degrees in modern higher education [58]; and
- According to the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics... while employment of writers and editors generally is predicted to rise in line with the overall national employment average, opportunities should be best for technical writers and those with training in a specialized field [60].

The Information Economy

Another important way program statements appeal to popular *doxa* is through the use of language representing the culture of the information economy. This

use is not always a problem because one would expect to see attention to this discourse in PTC pedagogy. The point is, rather, that such language is often the primary linguistic register of program website statements, and in this way, such statements attempt to demonstrate an adherence to the public *doxa* of pre-professionalism much more prominently than to the private *doxa* of PTC's scholarly discourse. Numerous statements refer directly to the production, design, or management of information:

- Students will learn how to produce, to design, and to manage information, using both traditional and developing technologies [5];
- Hones students' abilities to shape technical, managerial and corporate information using written, oral and visual media [10];
- People who make information accessible, usable, and relevant to a variety of audiences are professional writers [30];
- Provides an understanding of communication practices, familiarity with information and communication technologies, and an awareness of the importance of collaboration in enhancing the flow of information throughout an organization [41]; and
- Offers an ongoing forum for the study and critique of theories and practices of information design [52].

Core Skills and Competitive Advantages

Finally, the specific knowledge and skills programs offer are often couched in the terms of the capitalist, bureaucratic economies out of which popular *doxa* concerning higher education arise. Themes of competition and isolable (and thereby accountable) competencies dominate.⁴ Again, the point is not that such language is surprising, but that in the place of any other language, it becomes the basis for the presentation of program missions to the public. As such, this point further reflects adherence to popular *doxa* concerning what might be important or valuable in a PTC program:

- [Students] receive state-of-the-art training in the core skills demanded by the profession, including technical writing, technical editing, and graphic design [22];
- [Students] will demonstrate that they have the core competencies necessary for entry-level positions as technical communicators [43];
- Technical communication majors will have a wide variety of career paths available to them, and will be able to earn a competitive salary doing so [44];

⁴ The commonly used term *core competence*, it should be noted, was first used in a seminal article on corporate management (see Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

- Prepares students with core competencies in writing, editing, and designing of technical documents [67]; and
- Designed for students who want to learn the writing and editing skills required in today's competitive workplace [111].

Recommendations

In the foregoing account of what is said in journals and what is said on the Web, I hope to have raised some questions that program directors will consider seriously; in response to these questions, I offer both an explanation and some suggestions. First, I adopted the term *doxa* to address why Web-based program descriptions reflect a nearly monolithic rhetoric of pre-professionalism, although the scholarly discussions about program missions reflect a heterogeneous mix of conceptual frameworks, voices, and positions. Because both journal-based and Web-based discourses are forms of rhetoric, they are founded on commonly held, unspoken, and sometimes unconscious beliefs, or *doxa*. Adhering to popular *doxa* about the purpose and value of higher education, these unspoken beliefs include the idea that a college degree is a form of cultural capital useful primarily for getting a job, that this is the ideal purpose of a college degree, and that degree programs ought to aim for this ideal. Such popular *doxa* prevail on program websites. Yet in academic journals, the *doxa* reflects not only a broader conception of program missions but also alternatives to precisely those popular *doxa*. Genre differences alone cannot account for, in my view, this internal contradiction in the discourse.

What, then, should we do? A review of themes encountered in both journal-based and Web-based discourses suggests several tips and possible edits for websites. These four suggestions are meant to apply to the welcome page seen by the public. (For people just checking out a program, putting such nuanced information in a subdirectory is as good as burying it.)

Adopt language that reflects the scholarly discourse.

Using dense, theory-laden language may be unwise, but it would be a sign of self-respect to ground a public Web presence in a serious intellectual framework, making at least some reference—right at the start, right on the surface—to fields such as classical rhetoric, literacy studies, technology theory, and service learning. Even the inherently internal discussion of the pedagogy-practice gap can be addressed by identifying and articulating ways to prepare students to make the leap from coursework to careers.

Make it clear that pre-professional training is only part of the mission.

Phrases such as “prepares students for careers in...” should not be eliminated, but they should be reframed as one among several benefits of participating in the degree program offered. For example, writing a brief paragraph or two

(because brevity is key on websites) can help explain *how* programs prepare students for jobs and careers. In addition, many programs do have other major missions (e.g., serving the community) that can be foregrounded on websites as well.

Acknowledge or integrate humanism and humanist perspectives.

A theoretical framework also conveys that PTC is an intellectually rich, academic discipline that helps cultivate students' wielding of a complex *techné*. This emphasis can be done simply by making reference—on program websites, not just in classes—to problems of ethics and community awareness as well as through notions such as critique and theorization. I do not believe that this conception of PTC undermines its practical, real-world usefulness, but on the contrary, grounds it.

Keep it simple.

The previous suggestions are not meant to imply that program websites should be text-heavy, dull, theoretical expositions. Rather, the key is to use these suggestions to balance an online rhetoric that otherwise comes across as weighted too much in favor of a popular *doxa*, which narrows its perspective at best, and at worst, is contrary to the professional and pedagogical program values.

Closing Comment

In my role as PTC program administrator as well as unofficial department Web designer, I am well aware of the difficulty of adequately addressing and implementing the problems and suggestions I've outlined in this article. In addition to the practical challenge of creating and maintaining a good website (i.e., one that students and others will read and find useful), the rhetorical challenge is to create online discourse that captures student interest—which is informed in large part by popular *doxa* that casts higher education's role as one of job preparation—while maintaining the professional and intellectual depth I advocate. I have made this first step with my program's website, but in the process discovered it can be difficult to re-frame one's program *without* constant reference to its capacity to prepare students for jobs and careers. However, I do believe it is possible to work through and address this rhetorical problem. The first step, which I hope I have provided, is to begin the discussion.

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Appendix

List of Schools Examined

1. Akron, University of
2. Alabama in Huntsville, University of
3. Appalachian State University
4. Arcadia University
5. Arizona State University at the Polytechnic Campus
6. Arkansas at Little Rock, University of
7. Auburn University
8. Austin Peay State University
9. Baylor University
10. Bentley University
11. Boise State University
12. Bowling Green State University
13. Brigham Young University
14. California Polytechnic State University (CalPoly)
15. Carnegie Mellon University
16. Cedarville University
17. Central Florida, University of
18. Christopher Newport University
19. Clarkson University
20. Clemson University
21. Colorado State University
22. Colorado at Denver, University of
23. Delaware, University of
24. Drexel University
25. East Carolina University
26. Eastern Kentucky University
27. Eastern Michigan University
28. Eastern Washington University
29. Elon University
30. Fairfield University
31. Farmingdale State College

32. Francis Marion University
33. George Mason University
34. Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)
35. Georgia Southern University
36. Georgia State University
37. Hartford, University of
38. Hawai'i at Manoa University
39. Hilbert College
40. Houston–Downtown, University of
41. Illinois Institute of Technology
42. Illinois State University
43. Indiana University–Perdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
44. Iowa State University
45. James Madison University
46. Kansas State University
47. King's College
48. Kutztown University
49. Lawrence Technological University (Lawrence Tech)
50. Louisiana State University-Shreveport
51. Madonna University
52. Massachusetts Amherst, University of
53. Memphis, University of
54. Mercer University
55. Metropolitan State College of Denver
56. Metropolitan State University (Minnesota)
57. Miami University (Ohio)
58. Michigan Technology University (Michigan Tech)
59. Minnesota State University, Mankato
60. Minnesota, University of
61. Missouri State University
62. Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly Missouri S&T)
63. Missouri Western State University
64. Montana Tech of the University of Montana
65. Morehead State University
66. Nazareth College
67. Nebraska at Omaha, University of
68. New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT)
69. New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech)
70. New Mexico State University
71. New Mexico, University of
72. New York Institute of Technology
73. North Carolina at Charlotte, University of
74. North Carolina State University at Raleigh
75. North Carolina Wilmington, University of
76. North Texas, University of
77. Northern Arizona University

The Pedagogical Missions of Professional and Technical Communication Programs

78. Northern Illinois University
79. Northern Iowa, University of
80. Oklahoma State University (Stillwater and Oklahoma City)
81. Old Dominion University
82. Pittsburg State University
83. Pittsburgh, University of
84. Polytechnic University of New York
85. Portland State University
86. Purdue University
87. Radford University
88. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI)
89. Rochester Institute of Technology
90. Rutgers University
91. Saginaw Valley State University
92. St. Edward's University
93. San Diego State University
94. San Francisco State University
95. Shepherd University
96. South Florida, University of
97. Southeastern Louisiana University
98. Southern Polytechnic State University (Southern Poly)
99. Missouri State University
100. State University of New York at Cortland (SUNY Cortland)
101. State University of New York Institute of Technology
102. Tennessee, University of
103. Tennessee Tech University
104. Texas A&M University
105. Texas at Arlington, University of
106. Texas at San Antonio, University of
107. Texas State University–San Marcos
108. Texas Tech University
109. Towson University
110. Utah State University
111. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)
112. Washington State University–Pullman
113. Washington State University Vancouver
114. Washington, University of
115. Weber State University
116. West Chester University
117. West Texas A & M University
118. West Virginia University
119. Widener University
120. Wisconsin–Milwaukee, University of
121. Wisconsin–Stout, University of
122. Worcester Polytechnic Institute
123. Wright State University

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