**Call for Proposals: A Special Issue of Technical Communication Quarterly**

**Title:** Responding to the Changing Landscape of the Technical Communication Workplace in the 21st Century

**Guest Editors:** Laura Vernon, Radford University, and Diane Martinez, Western Carolina University

**Description:** Career-related instruction and job-search support is common in technical communication courses and programs. Many technical communication textbooks feature chapters on writing resumes and cover letters, creating ePorfolios, and completing service-learning projects. Students frequently complete internships, participate in undergraduate research, or engage with social media to find or bolster their chances of finding jobs upon graduation. Technical communication pedagogies and programs are committed to helping students prepare for the modern workplace, but the workplace has changed in the last 25 years. Students face a different workplace where expectations and experiences have been altered by technology; the COVID-19 pandemic; social and political unrest and wars throughout the world; and the elimination or scrutiny of DEI initiatives. Changes and challenges in the 21st century workplace include the following:

* Remote work, demands for flexibilities, disengaged employees, changing definitions of a workplace, emergence of the gig economy, emphasis on soft skills, exposure to artificial intelligence and other technical innovations, labor shortages, intergenerational challenges, uncertainty, and a focus on employee mental health wellbeing are just some of the impacts of the modern world on the workplace (Alagah, 2022; Gallup, 2024; Gramlich, 2022; Parker, Horowitz, & Minkin, 2022; Spinuzzi, 2023; Tailspin, 2023; Wigert, 2023; Yaqoob, AL-Huqail, & Aziz, 2024; Yi, 2023).
* Several studies have found that many college students are skeptical they have the skills they need and feel confused about the value of their degrees but are concerned about foregoing a college education (Cengage Group, 2022); employers find recent graduates are not well prepared with certain skill sets, mainly communication (AAC&U, 2024; Gray, 2024); and many college graduates either are not employed in college-level jobs or are underemployed for up to a year after graduation (Hanson et al., 2024).
* Employees and employers alike must manage workplace phenomena such as work-life balance, quiet quitting/firing/hiring, proximity bias, productivity paranoia, and career cushioning.
* Specifically, technical communication researchers, instructors, and practitioners have answered the call to embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice and to seek positive change that further legitimizes the field, empowers themselves, and makes a difference for all people (Jones, 2016; Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016). However, in general, DEI workplace initiatives face greater public and political scrutiny, and many states are introducing bills or passing laws forbidding the practice of DEI, resulting in an uncertain future (Ellis & Thorbecke, 2024; Guynn, 2024; Oaks, 2024).

Because of the changed workplace landscape, the technical communication field needs to respond by updating research related to writing career-related documents, creating and using career-related technologies, and engaging in career-related activities. Further research is needed on the changes in the field; industry, market, and hiring trends; job search strategies; competencies and skills; challenges and advances toward a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace and workforce; and changes to pedagogies and programs. With the swift arrival and pervasive presence of artificial intelligence, specific research is needed to understand how artificial intelligence is shaping the development of career-related documents and job expectations. In essence, two critical questions emerge: “What do the changes and challenges of the 21st century workplace mean for technical communication, and how can future and current technical communicators navigate the complexities they face?”

Therefore, this special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* invites scholars in the teaching, research, or practice of technical communication to contribute articles with this focus in mind.

**Topics to Consider:** This special issue seeks contributions on topics such as:

* Innovative approaches to writing resumes, cover letters, and elevator pitches for technical communication job seekers
* Design and use of ePorfolios in the technical communication field
* Engaging in internships, undergraduate research projects, and service-learning projects in technical communication
* Technical communication industry, job-market, and hiring trends
* The rise, influence, and impact of the gig economy on technical communication
* Diversity, DEI efforts, minority populations, and interdisciplinarity in the technical communication workplace and workforce
* Effects of a changing technical communication workplace on minority populations
* Social media and other technologies for technical communication job seekers
* Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and their implications for technical communicators
* Necessary technologies that support and sustain remote work for technical communicators
* Professional branding strategies for technical communicators
* Effective networking strategies (both at college and in a professional setting) for technical communicators
* Core technical communication competencies/skills
* Job-search strategies and workplace expectations for technical communicators
* A technical communication field profile
* Recommended changes to technical communication pedagogies and programs

**Questions to Consider:** Potential contributors may want to consider the following questions:

* What does the technical communication field look like in the 21st century? How has the technical communication field changed in the last 25 years ? What has caused these changes? Where are technical communicators working? How does the gig economy affect technical communication as a field or in preparing students for a rapidly changing workplace?
* How has technical communication career-related instruction changed in the first quarter of this century? What has caused these changes? If it has not changed, why not and how should it change? What should technical communication instructors and program directors be doing differently?
* How can technical communication students best prepare for the modern workplace? What competencies or skills do they need? How can they develop these competencies or skills?
* What role do internships, undergraduate research, and/or service-learning play in helping technical communication students prepare for today’s workplace? How can technical communication instructors and program directors integrate them into their pedagogy and program development?
* What are the technical communication industry, job-market, and/or hiring trends? What has influenced these trends? How can technical communicators prepare for and/or navigate the implications of these trends?
* What innovative approaches can technical communication students and practitioners take when writing resumes, cover letters, and elevator pitches; developing a professional brand; creating ePortfolios; networking; and/or searching for jobs?
* What role should artificial intelligence play in helping technical communication students and practitioners write career-related documents? What are the ethical implications? How should hiring managers in the technical communication field evaluate career-related documents written with AI assistance?
* How can technical communication students and practitioners use social media and other technologies to enhance their job search efforts? What other job-search strategies or processes are important for future and current technical communicators to incorporate into their efforts?
* What political, economic, social, cultural, and/or psychological forces influence today’s technical communication workplaces, pedagogies, and programs? How are these forces impacting technical communication workplace, pedagogy, and program expectations and the ability to meet them? What are the implications for technical communication workplaces, pedagogies, and programs?
* How do 21st century technical communication workplaces, pedagogies, and programs accommodate the unique needs of minority populations? What is the outcome of these accommodations on technical communication workplaces, pedagogies, and programs?
* How are minority populations contributing to technical communication workplace collaborations and innovations? How can minority populations participate and influence academy-industry collaborations and innovations?
* How do DEI efforts relate to the work of technical communicators specifically? How has the Trump administration affected diversity in the workplace? Have past DEI efforts enhanced or complicated the workplace? Has the elimination of DEI efforts complicated the work of technical communicators?
* What role does interdisciplinarity play in technical communication research, programs, and job-search efforts? Who are technical communicators collaborating with in educational programming and in the workplace? What alliances or collaborations would be beneficial?

**Submission Types:** The invitation to contribute to this special issue is extended to scholars in the teaching, research, or practice of technical communication. Contributions can be original research articles (e.g., analytical, argumentative, interpretative, compare-and-contrast, cause-and-effect articles), tutorials, personal narratives, literature reviews, teaching cases, and case studies. All forms of research methodologies and approaches (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, interviews, surveys, focus groups, ethnographies, observations), theoretical lens, perspectives, and experiences are welcomed. Both solo and collaborative articles will be considered. Collaborations between academics and industry professionals are encouraged. Additionally, experimental or emerging approaches to research and genres are welcomed.

**Contributions from MMU Scholars:** Multiply Marginalized and Underrepresented (MMU) scholars—including graduate students, first-time submitters to TCQ, and early-career scholars—are encouraged to submit a proposal. Opportunities to be mentored through the proposal and manuscript development process are available by contacting Laura Vernon at lvernon@radford.edu and Diane Martinez at dlmartinez@email.wcu.edu.

**Proposal Submission:** Interested contributors to this special issue should submit a 500-word (excluding references) proposal (.docx format, email attachment) by October 1, 2025, to tcqspecialedition@gmail.com. The proposal should include the author’s name, affiliation, and email address, working title for the article, and appropriate details about the article (depending on the genre and methodology), including plans for obtaining IRB approval, if applicable. The full manuscript should be around 4,000 to 5,000 words, excluding references, and should include recommendations.

**Inquiries and Support:** Questions and help with proposal ideas and manuscript development can be directed to Laura Vernon at lvernon@radford.edu and Diane Martinez at dlmartinez@email.wcu.edu.

**Timeline:** The schedule for the special issue is as follows:

* Call for proposals released: August 1, 2025
* Proposal submission deadline: October 1, 2025
* Review of proposals completed: October 31, 2025
* Notification of acceptance: November 3, 2025
* Final manuscript due: April 13, 2026
* Peer review of manuscripts completed: May 31, 2026
* Notification of revisions needed: June 8, 2026
* Revision of final manuscripts due: July 31, 2026
* Final editing completed: September 15, 2026
* Publication date: January 2027

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