

Call for Proposals

Elections, Technical Communication, and the Global Politics of Participatory Democracy

Edited by Isidore Dorpenyo and Ryan Cheek

In this edited collection, we reflect back on Nancy [Blyler's \(1998\)](#) call that reflected the Geist of the “political turn,” empowerment and emancipation (Herndl, 1993; Sullivan, 1990). The political turn, for Blyler, was a time for the field to be more critical, that is, a time to adopt an approach that prepares students for roles as “citizens and ‘responsible political agents’” (p. 33) ready to “engage in social action” (p. 33). Consequently, we find technical communicators discussing issues about environmental degradation ([Frost 2013](#); [Sackey, 2020](#)), elections ([Cheek 2023](#); [Dorpenyo, 2024](#); [Richter, 2026](#)), public engagement ([Bowdon, 2004](#); [Gonzales, 2022](#); [Pigg & Scheper, 2022](#)), disaster studies, ([Baniya, 2022](#)), health and medicine ([Ding, 2009](#); [Green, 2021](#)), race ([Haas, 2012](#); [Williams & Pimentel, 2012](#)) and more recently, the ‘social justice turn’ calling on the field to adopt dignity as a core principle ([Walton, 2016](#)) and to design communication that amplifies the agency of marginalized populations ([Agboka, 2013](#); [Walton et al, 2019](#)).

Social action and the engagement of the ideals of social justice requires collectively advocating for vulnerable populations and responding to anti-democratic practices that have gained ascendancy in our global societies. We have witnessed how anti-democratic practices surveil and shape what we teach, what we research, what we publish, and which students we admit. Many of these anti-democratic practices and human rights abuses are enabled by technical rhetoric and discourses that our field is uniquely equipped to challenge. Technical communicators are up to the task because advocacy is our “core mandate” and our rhetorical skills position us to work towards justice everywhere (Agboka & Dorpenyo, 2022, p. 6). More so, technical communicators can rise up to the task because of our tripartite roles as practitioners, producers, and active participants in the construction of knowledge (Johnson, 1998). As practitioners, technical communicators are aware that although we may not be part of the power elites, the decisions that are made by corrupt systems and institutions affect how we practice our profession and we know we embody cunning intelligence that must be used to change systems of oppression. As participatory citizens in democracies, technical communicators have a responsibility to respond to antidemocratic practices that endanger elections and to ensure that processes are equitable and understandable for all ([Cheek, 2023](#); [Dorpenyo, 2016](#); [Whitney, 2013](#)).

Responding to this call, there has been an upsurge in TPC research on the practice of politics and the use of electoral technology ([Cheek, 2021](#); [Dorpenyo & Agboka, 2018](#); [Dorpenyo, 2024](#); [Jones & Williams, 2018](#); [Sano-Franchini, 2018](#); [Sánchez, 2022](#)). Continued intervention is necessary because political processes and outcomes shape our field in complex and multiple ways. As participatory citizens in democracies, technical communicators have a vital responsibility to ensure elections and their processes are equitable and understandable for all ([Cheek, 2023](#); [Dorpenyo, 2019](#); [Ritcher, 2026](#); [Whitney, 2013](#)). It is also our call to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace ([Walton et al, 2019](#)) unjust and undemocratic elections as the consequence of inequity, structural injustice, and discrimination.

This edited collection invites chapter proposals that examine how TPC practitioners and scholars are both shaped by and implicated in the design, execution, outcome, and legitimacy of electoral systems and democratic infrastructures worldwide. To advance this conversation, we invite contributions in the following areas:

Section One: Engineering the Election Infrastructure (ballots, platforms, interfaces, Voter IDs & the work of designing democracy)

- How do electoral laws and election technologies influence how we discuss civic advocacy and participatory democracy in the field of technical and professional communication?
- How might ballot papers and mail-in ballots reveal corrupt electoral practices?
- How are election technologies communicated or designed to intentionally confuse or marginalize specific groups of people?
- How can technical communicators transmit knowledge about electoral practices in a socially just way?
- What tactical approaches can technical communicators adopt to dismantle unjust attacks on electoral practices?
- How does interface design (ballots, platforms, voter registration) influence voter behavior in unjust electoral systems?
- How might we leverage principles of usability and user-experience to design electoral documents that are accessible and human-centered?
- How do we understand the relationship between technical communication and anti-democratic policies and structures?

Section Two: Electioneering in Digital Publics (campaigns, platforms, disinformation, and algorithmic persuasion)

- How might TPC practices (document design, interface UX, translation/localization, data dashboards, content governance) subvert democratic participation and articulate power dynamics?
- How might campaign practices reproduce gender inequality, racism, and white supremacy?

- How has the increased use of generative AI made electoral processes vulnerable and how can TPC address such vulnerabilities?
- How can technical communicators think critically about technologies of disenfranchisement?
- How do we ensure the ethical use of AI in electoral communication?
- What can technical communicators learn about how electoral communication reproduces, maintains, and produces discrimination, disinformation, and marginalization?
- How do affordances of social media platforms challenge our notions of accessibility and disenfranchisement?
- How do campaign practices reveal oppressive rhetorical approaches?
- How might TPC research, teaching, and practice become a tool used to communicate and upend anti-democratic ideology and power?

Section Three: Global Electoral Systems & Civic Participation (International, Multilingual, and postcolonial frameworks for democratic design)

- How does global politics—emerging democracies, established regimes, authoritarian transitions—offer rich contexts for TPC scholarship of election technology, design, translation, and geopolitical rhetorics?
- How can technical communication research in elections and electoral practices contribute to the eradication of global inequality, epistemic erasure of minority history, and continued marginalization of vulnerable communities?
- How does the annexation of smaller countries by powerful countries reshape technical communication research on immigration and intercultural communication?
- How might we continue our mandate to grow the international student population in TPC programs when administrative policies make it obvious international students are a drain on national coffers?

Section Four: Social Justice, Policy, and Post-Election Technologies (what happens after the ballots are counted)

- How might TPC respond to the structural and institutional destabilization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs and initiatives by political activists?
- How might we adopt social justice theories and practices in TPC to design election-technologies (digital ballots, verification systems, artificial-intelligence-enabled persuasion, platform algorithms) that can reshape civic communication, accessibility, and transparency?
- How do we respond when the results of elections and political activities open up space for overt and explicit abuse of power and systemic injustice?
- How might social justice theories be deployed to enact change in electoral processes?

- How might coalitions be built to address anti-democratic practices that dismantle democratic institutions, freedom of speech, and advocacy?
- How does the current global precarity challenge our notions of justice, diversity, and inclusion?
- How might social justice theories provide a unifying force in the face of political and antidemocratic practices?
- What social justice methodologies or theories can help TPC deconstruct oppressive power structures?

We welcome submissions that address these issues or related topics.

Submission Guidelines

Proposals should demonstrate engagement with relevant scholarship in technical and professional communication and indicate how the chapter will address one or more of the themes outlined in this call. The proposal should also clearly outline the proposed chapter's argument, methodology, and potential contribution to the aims of the collection.

Each submission should include the following:

- proposal of 500-750 words (excluding references)
- Working title
- An author biography for each contributor (100-150 words) that includes institutional affiliations and relevant research areas.
- An email address for each contributor

Please submit proposals as a single document to Dr. Ryan Cheek at ryancheek@mst.edu or Dr. Isidore Kafui Dorpenyo at dorpe001@umn.edu.

Timeline:

- August 1, 2026—proposals due
- October 1, 2026—Feedback from editors
- February 1, 2027—draft chapters due

Nota Bene: This project has moved past the initial proposal stage at WAC Clearinghouse and the editorial team awaits details of the chapter proposals.