



# Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators  
Autumn 2011



Taking a look at the archives of technical illustration

How do you use colour in your documentation?

Learn how to create successful bids

Read about a company that has created help for mobiles



## Presidential address

### Professional development

The ISTC has been working hard this year to establish practical ways for technical communicators to develop, no matter how experienced you are or how advanced you are in your career. I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you about the things we are doing to support every stage of a technical communicator's career.

### Understanding what it's all about

Telling people about careers options is a key part of the ISTC's role. So far this year, we have been:

- Attending careers events, with the ISTC stand and marketing materials and talking to students
- Contacting, and providing content for, careers websites and university careers services
- Creating a new flyer about technical communication as a career, see <http://tiny.cc/istccareers>
- Taking up opportunities to contribute to industry journals, see our recent contribution to Nature <http://tiny.cc/NatureTechWriter>.

### Early learning

We recognised earlier this year that the ISTC open learning course wasn't the best basis for us to support the early learning of technical communicators in future. Although many aspects of technical communicator roles haven't changed much over the years, some have. The ways in which people want to learn was not being reflected in how the course content was designed or delivered.

Instead of continuing as a training provider, the ISTC is becoming a standards body that grants accreditation to courses offered by respected training providers. These may be existing courses, new courses, or modules developed at the ISTC's request.

Alongside this, we have established a mentoring scheme for new entrants to the profession. Junior members receive impartial advice on career development, and the mentor provides technical advice; helps to develop technical skills and provides specific tuition. Junior members also have access to the wider set of experience provided by the ISTC community.

### Continuing to learn

A key goal for us is to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for all our members, not just for those who are new to our profession. A formal CPD programme will take time to achieve but there are many ways you can keep learning in the meantime:

- Read and follow up on articles in *Communicator* and InfoPlus+
- Go online to ask questions: discussion forums (page 8), LinkedIn and Twitter @istc\_org
- Attend the Technical Communication UK conference and ISTC Local Area Group meetings
- Take advantage of ISTC discounts on business affiliate training courses in tools and techniques
- Get involved with ISTC projects.

### Old dogs?

Of course, you may be just too experienced to learn anything new. It happens! For those of you who have done all the learning, how about passing some of it on to those of us who would benefit from your wisdom and scars:

- Become a mentor, to help guide a new technical communicator
- Contribute articles to *Communicator* and InfoPlus+
- Answer questions in online forums
- Present at the Technical Communication UK conference
- Enter your work for one of the ISTC Technical Communication Awards
- Join the ISTC Council.

Mind you, I can't promise you won't learn something new. Sorry. **C**

**Paul Ballard FISTC**

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## The Institute

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators is the largest UK body for people engaged in technical communication. The ISTC encourages professional development and standards, provides research resources and networking opportunities, and promotes technical communication as a profession.

To join the ISTC, change your grade, or get involved in what we do, contact the ISTC office on +44 (0) 20 8253 4506 or [istc@istc.org.uk](mailto:istc@istc.org.uk)

### The Council and its supporting team

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