An Introduction To

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

"The creative use of language and design to accommodate people and technology—including writing, editing, graphics, and publications management."
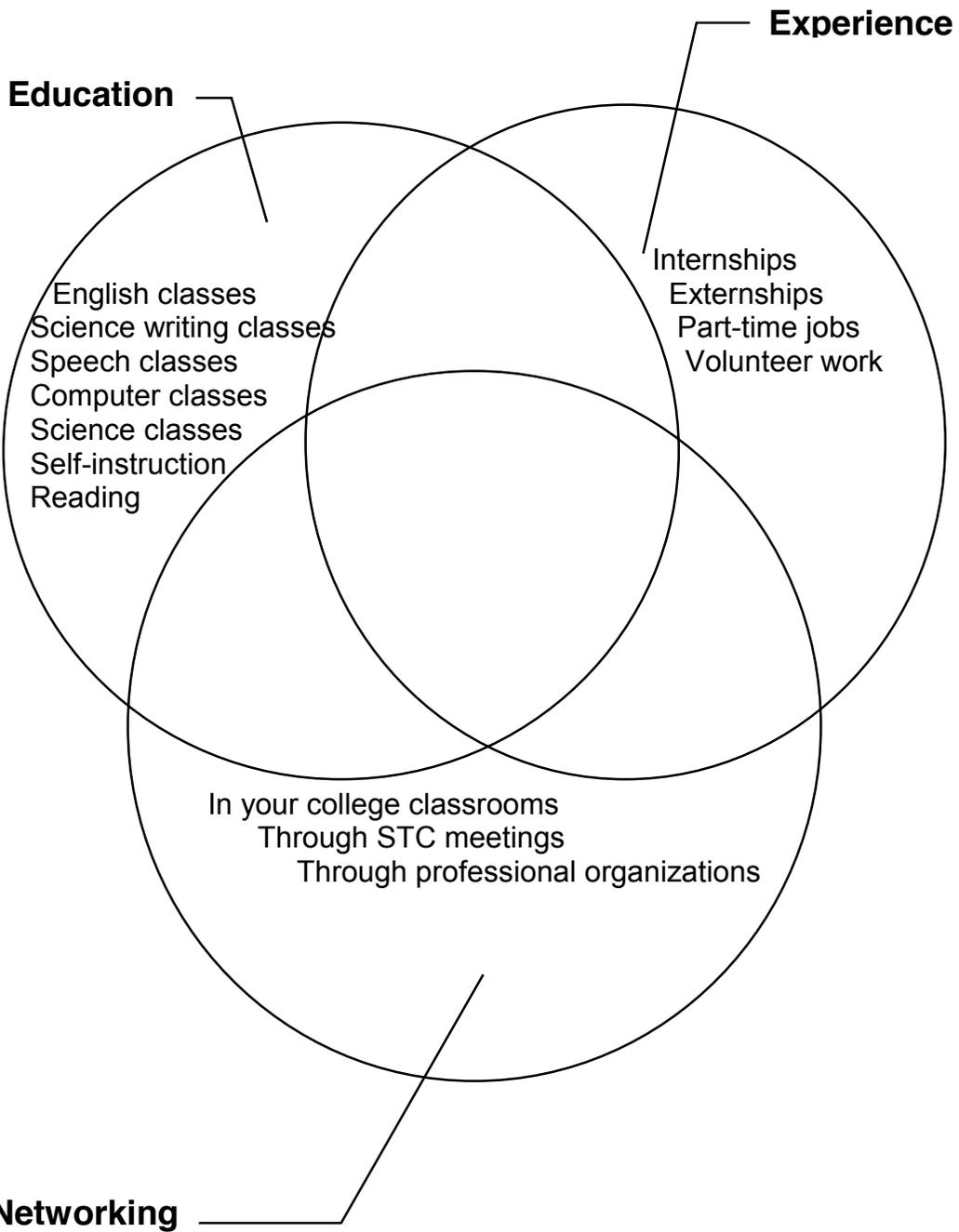
1999 Salary Figures from STC Survey of 2,200 Respondents:

By Employment Level:
- **Entry Level Mean is $36,800**
- **Entry Level Top is $45,400**

By Degree (across all levels of employment):
- **Bachelor's Mean is $50,500; Top is $69,000**
- **Master's Mean is $52,000; Top is $70,000**
- **Doctorate Mean is $59,400; Top is ????**

Education

Experience

English classes
Science writing classes
Speech classes
Computer classes
Science classes
Self-instruction
Reading

Internships
Externships
Part-time jobs
Volunteer work

In your college classrooms
Through STC meetings
Through professional organizations

Networking

Areas of Preparation for Future Technical Communicators. The more you do in each, the better prepared you will be for your

TECH COMM CAREER ACCESS CHANNELS

Education: Journalism courses, English courses, science & technology courses, library & information science courses, software courses. Majors or minors.

Practical Experience: Internships, externships, freelance work, volunteer work, entry-level or part-time work.

Networking: Classroom, print media, Internet (listservs, etc.), prof. societies, conventions.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION COURSES AT UTK

English 360 Technical and Professional Writing
For students planning careers in industry, education, and government who need technical writing skills. Writing of definitions, process descriptions, sets of instructions, descriptions of mechanisms, recommendation reports, abstracts, proposals, and major reports. **This course is especially useful for English majors and others who are considering careers as writers or editors. It should be taken as the first course in a three-course sequence (English 360, 460, 462; or English 360, 460, 484/466).**

English 460 Technical Editing
An essential course for English majors and others who are considering careers as editors. **(English 360 is prerequisite for E. 460. E. 460 can be taken either before or after English 462, Writing for Publication.)**

English 462 Writing for Publication
Principles and practices of writing for publication. Dissertations, theses, articles, and reports in science and technology. English majors who take this course develop their skills as writers, teachers, and editors by working as coaches to graduate students who are writing in other disciplines. **English majors and other who plan careers as communication professionals should take this course only after taking English 360, Technical and Professional Writing.**

English 466 Document Design and Desktop Publishing
Principles of page design, typography, and layout. Using scanners, electronic art, and DTP software. Conducted in a Macintosh computer lab.

PERIODICALS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (*), RHETORIC, & COMPOSITION

Argumentation	BC 1.A74
Bulletin of the Ass'n for Business Communication*	HF 5718.A23
CEA Critic	PF 1.C74
College Composition and Communication	PE 1001.C6
College English	PE 1.C6
Communication Arts	NC 997.A1C3
Editor & Publisher*	PN 4700.E4
English Journal	PE 1.E51
Freshman English News	PE 1001.F74
IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*	T 11.I5
Journal of Bus. and Tech. Comm. (JTBC)*	HF 5717.I582
Journal of Advanced Composition	PE 1404.J672
Journal of Basic Writing	PE 1404.J68
Journal of Business Communication*	HF 5718.J6
Journal of Teaching Writing	PE 1404.J69
Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*	T 11.J66
Management Communication Quarterly*	HD 30.3 M36
Philosophy and Rhetoric	B 1.P47
Publisher's Weekly*	Z 1219.P98
Quarterly Journal of Speech	PN 4071.Q3
Research in the Teaching of English	PE 1.R53
Rhetorica	PN 183.R45
Rhetoric Review	PN 171.4 R44
Rhetoric Society Quarterly	PN 171.4 R46
Scholarly Publishing	Z286.S37S33
Speech Communication	BF 455.S718
Teaching English in the Two-Year College	PE 1065.T4
Technical Communication*	T11.T4
Technical Communication Quarterly*	T 11.T43
Visible Language	Z 119.J67
TESOL Quarterly	PE 1001.T486
TESOL News	PE 1001.T48
Style	PS 1.S89
WPA: Writing Program Administration	PE 1404.W18
Writing Center Journal	PE 1408.W84
Writing Instructor	PE 1001.W74
Writing Lab Newsletter	PE 1404.W75
Written Communication (vol. 1-4)	P 211.W74

TECH COMM ON THE WEB

John December Technical Communication Information Sources
http://www.december.com/john/study/techcomm/info.html

The St. Martin's Press Bibliography of Business and Technical Communication
http://www.smpcollege.com/bustech_biblio/resources.html#Internet Discussion Groups

1998-99 Occupational Outlook Handbook
http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm

The major listserv is techwr-l. There are countless minor ones.

ERIC Digest on teaching technical communication:
http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/ieo/digests/d58.html

STC Twin Cities' chapter Web Links: http://stc.org/region6/tcc/links.html

STC periodical publications are now searchable at http://www.stc-va.org/newsearchindex3.html

Prof. Brad Mehlenbacher's overview of the field plus areas of research, at
http://courses.ncsu.edu/classes/eng421/Lessons/history1.html

Prof. David McMurrey's excellent online overview, at
http://www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/profession_plan.html

For web page design (Jakob Nielsen's pages):
http://www.useit.com/

For New Media Writing, the Writers' Guild of America (west) pages at
http://www.wga.org/index.html

WHAT'S GOOD AND WHAT'S BAD

What's Good: Tech. comm. is *people intensive*. If you're looking to spend entire uninterrupted days by yourself alone with a stack of manuscript (or directory full of files), you need to know that is a very, very unusual situation in tech. comm. today. Spend a few days lurking on the techwr-l list and you'll see both the good and the bad of this.

What's Bad: Tech. comm. is *computer intensive*. If you have good computer skills and can write and edit, it's easy to use your good computer skills to get a job, only to find that you are the lowest paid computer nerd in the office. Desirable entry-level computer skills include
- Word for Windows (basic, for word processing),
- PageMaker (more advanced, for page layout),
- Quark Express (for desktop publishing, now you're getting good), and
- Specialized applications such as FrameMaker, or RoboHelp, or HTML from scratch (go to work tomorrow in Atlanta).

What's Unusual: The last ten years or so have seen this profession go from (a) one in which perhaps sixty to eighty percent of its members were regular, fulltime employees of just one or another company for most of their careers to (b) one in which sixty or more percent of its members are basically full-time freelancers or contract workers who move from company to company. There's still some sense of playing work-up, of "eventually getting a full-time long-term position, with benefits," but growing numbers of technical communicators neither ever expect nor ever want such a position. This change works in favor of people who are *entrepreneurial* and leaves open more opportunity for people who want to work at home and/or commute electronically. This change makes life difficult for people who don't want to remarket themselves every three or six months, or who have problems realizing that their own professional development is their own responsibility.

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