Connecting People with Technology: Issues in Professional Communication (Baywood's Technical Communications Series)

George F. Hayhoe and Helen M. Grady

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This book explores five important areas where technology affects society, and suggests ways in which human communication can facilitate the use of that technology. Usability has become a foundational discipline in technical and professional communication that grows out of our rhetorical roots, which emphasize purpose and audience. As our appreciation of audience has grown beyond engineers and scientists to lay users of technology, our appreciation of the diversity of those audiences in terms of age, geography, and other factors has similarly expanded. We are also coming to grips with what Thomas Friedman calls the 'flat world,' a paradigm that influences how we communicate with members of other cultures and speakers of other languages. And because most of the flatteners are either technologies themselves or technology-driven, technical and professional communicators need to leverage these technologies to serve global audiences. Similarly, we are inundated with information about world crises involving health and safety issues. These crises are driven by the effects of terrorism, the aging population, HIV/AIDS, and both human-made and natural disasters. These issues are becoming more visible because they are literally matters of life and death. Furthermore, they are of special concern to audiences that technical and professional communicators have little experience targeting - the shapers of public policy, seniors, adolescents, and those affected by disaster. Biotechnology is another area that has provided new roles for technical and professional communicators. We are only beginning to understand how to communicate the science accurately without either deceiving or panicking our audience. We need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how communication can shape reactions to biotechnology developments. Confronting this complex network of issues, we're challenged to fashion both our message and the audience's perceptions ethically. Finally, today's corporate environment is being shaped by technology and the global nature of business. Technical and professional communicators can play a role in capturing and managing knowledge, in using technology effectively in the virtual workplace, and in understanding how language shapes organizational culture. Intended Audience: This book will be of interest to practitioners in technical and professional communication and to students and academics seeking up-to-date information on current industry practices in technical communication. Colleges and universities that offer bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in technical communication will find this a useful addition to their libraries. The book is also suitable as a text for undergraduate seminars and some courses at the master's level.

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