Building a Social Justice-Focused User Experience Approach to Technical Editing

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Abstract This program showcase highlights the redesign of a technical editing course within a technical and professional communication (TPC) certificate to center user experience (UX) and social justice. Through a sustained partnership with the academic library, students engage in experiential projects that emphasize accessibility, stakeholder advocacy, and ethical editing. The revised course, ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical Editing*, integrates UX methods with sociolinguistic and rhetorical theory to prepare students for audience-centered, justice-oriented communication work. Guided by a polyvocal collaboration among faculty, librarians, and students, the curriculum aligns program outcomes with inclusive editing practices. The showcase offers a model for other programs aiming to embed equity and usability into editing instruction through sustainable, real-world partnerships and reflective pedagogy.

Keywords technical editing, user experience, social justice, access and engagement, academic libraries, program design, inclusive TPC pedagogy

Amid growing calls to align technical and professional communication (TPC) pedagogy with principles of equity, accessibility, and social justice, technical editing courses offer a critical yet often overlooked site for curricular transformation (Benjamin & Schreiber, 2021). This article highlights how principles of user experience (UX), such as accessibility, usability, and equity, can inform technical editing course design, and how academic library partnerships can enable sustainable, mutually beneficial UX experiential learning models. Written from the perspectives of the course instructor, the TPC program director, a student research assistant, and an academic librarian, we trace a user experience-focused, partnership-based approach to the technical editing course.

Programmatic Perspectives, Fall 2025, 220-242, Contact Author: ksarraf@calpoly.edu

We first situate our technical editing course within the broader institutional context of our university and our TPC certificate's evolving pedagogical commitments. We then narrow our focus to the course level, detailing the design of ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical Editing*, including its learning outcomes, assignment designs, and integration of UX and experiential learning. Finally, we highlight the strategic role of our academic library partnership and explore how these curricular shifts open sustainable pathways for students interested in editing, publishing, and social justice-oriented communication work.

Our primary purpose in this article is to showcase one outcome of this reimagining: our revised technical editing course that hinges on a UX project in partnership with academic libraries. However, before we zoom in on the technical editing course, we provide an overview of the TPC program and our institution.

Institutional Context and Program Overview

To contextualize our TPC program's approach to technical editing, we briefly review the program's history as well as several institutional pressures driving the technical editing course reimagining offered in this manuscript. We work at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), a public polytechnic university on California's Central Coast. Cal Poly's TPC program, which consists primarily of a 28-unit Certificate open to all undergraduate students, regardless of major, aligns with the institution's focus on applied learning, or Learn by Doing, and prioritization of the teacher-scholar model (Boyer, 1990, 1996). Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy emphasizes experiential learning and is rooted in the educational philosophies of John Dewey (1937) and Paulo Freire (1968). The Learn by Doing philosophy encourages active participation to develop critical thinking and reflective skills (Bradberry, & De Maio, 2018), involving students in real-world problem-solving within community settings. Our TPC program approach, then, is designed to promote analysis, problem-solving, and reflection, helping students build competencies that go beyond specific tasks and skills, such as technical editing.

Students in the program gain firsthand experience in research and industry skills, and faculty regularly engage students in their scholarship of teaching and learning. For example, Madelyn Cruz, one of this article's co-authors, joined the TPC certificate program as an undergraduate student and participated as a student in the academic library partnership described in this article. Then, she joined our team as a graduate student researcher. Madelyn's experience reflects what we strive for as instructor (Morgan White), faculty librarian (Danielle Daugherty), and TPC program administrator (Krista Speicher

Sarraf) as we engage with TPC students—to prepare TPC students for "careers that combine text, media, and design, such as writing, editing, user experience and design," etc. through "high-quality, experiential education that emphasizes "hands-on" class projects, community service, client projects, internships, and teamwork" (Cal Poly, 2025, para. 1).

Krista arrived at Cal Poly in Fall 2022, at which time the TPC certificate was dormant due to the sudden passing of the former director, Dr. Chelsea Milbourne. With the immediate goals to revive the program and prepare it for impending "semester conversion,"[1] Krista set out to recruit students into the program under its existing structure, which was designed for the quarter system and included four required courses, two elective courses, and a practicum—a 28-unit program. Between 2022–2025, more than 85 students enrolled in the TPC certificate. Beyond the certificate program, more students took TPC courses—such as the technical editing course—without formally declaring the certificate. This pattern of students taking TPC classes but not declaring the certificate occurred in part because the 28-unit certificate is equivalent in units to a minor at Cal Poly, making it difficult for students in high-unit majors, or those with limited elective flexibility, to complete the certificate while remaining on track for timely graduation. Given the relatively small number of students pursuing the certificate on our comparatively large campus (22,279 students in 2023), Krista (the program director), Morgan (a TPC instructor), and other TPC faculty were motivated to reimagine its offerings to increase enrollment (*Facts and figures*, 2025). Using semester conversion as our catalyst, we revised the TPC certificate in two significant ways to expand its reach: (1) We reduced the total required units from 28 to 16, and (2) we modified two existing 3000-level courses[2] so they now meet general education (GE) requirements, allowing students to count a required TPC course toward their GE coursework. Beyond these technical changes to the program, semester conversion prompted us to rethink our program learning outcomes (PLOs) and several courses, including the technical editing course. From this point forward, we describe the TPC program as it exists under the semester system. The TPC program weaves the principles of UX and social justice across its program learning outcomes, preparing students to become socially responsible editors. This emphasis responds to Sedona Benjamin and Joanna

[1] As part of the 22-campus California State University system, Cal Poly was the last campus to transition from a quarter to a semester calendar. This system-wide "semester conversion" required departments to review and revise curricula, creating an opportunity for our program to embed user experience and social justice as core values in technical editing. Cal Poly's first term on semesters is fall 2026.

[2] One of these courses is ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical and Professional Editing*, the focus of this manuscript.

Schreiber's (2021) call for models of technical editing that center accessibility and social justice as primary editorial goals. Our TPC certificate's PLOs are as follows:

1. Apply the principles of rhetoric, design, and usability to communication challenges.
2. Communicate in technical and professional settings in an inclusive, equitable, and ethical manner.
3. Design user-centered communiques that meet the needs of a wide range of audiences.
4. Integrate communication, creativity, and critical thinking to address community challenges.
5. Work cross-functionally with diverse stakeholders to plan, implement, and monitor collaborative projects.
6. Acquire and verify subject knowledge through interviews, observations, and other research techniques.

Notably, these PLOs emphasize user experience and social justice principles throughout, as shown with bold text in the table above. Concepts such as usability and user-centered design are woven into the outcomes, positioning the program as one that foregrounds UX approaches within TPC activities, including technical editing. Moreover, the PLOs align UX with social justice priorities, such as promoting inclusive, equitable, and ethical design for diverse stakeholders. This program-wide focus on UX principles and social justice is most clearly realized in the technical editing course. In the following section, we situate this course within its broader theoretical and pedagogical contexts and describe the major assignment that operationalizes the academic library UX partnership. Our goal is to offer our reimagined technical editing course as an example for other programs interested in integrating UX, community-engagement, and social justice into technical editing instruction.

The Technical Editing Course: ENGL 3317

In this section, we contextualize the technical editing course, ENGL 3317: *Humanistic Perspectives in Technical and Professional Editing*, describing its learning objectives and theoretical frameworks, and then providing a description of the major assignment that enacts these frameworks and incorporates the academic library UX partnership.

ENGL 3317 enacts humanistic values by framing technical editing as a practice grounded in UX methods and equity-focused inquiry. The course learning objectives (CLOs) of ENGL 3317 work to complement the PLOs of the TPC program listed above, especially the emphasis on humanistic inquiry, language ideology, and UX. Table 1 below outlines the six

learning outcomes for the technical and professional editing course and their alignment with the program's broader PLOs.

Table 1: ENGL 3317 Course Learning Objectives

#	Course learning objective	Corresponding Program Learning Outcome(s)
1	Analyze technical and professional editing practices by examining rhetorical choices made by writers, readers, and editors in diverse linguistic contexts.	PLO Alignment: 1
2	Evaluate theoretical perspectives to enhance comprehension of technical and professional editing as a humanistic and rhetorical practice.	PLO Alignment: 2
3	Assess linguistic diversity and inclusion in technical and professional editing through ongoing reflective practices.	PLO Alignment: 2
4	Articulate perspectives on the role of technical and professional editors in relation to stakeholders including readers, writers, and texts.	PLO Alignment: 3
5	Evaluate how diverse histories and ideologies shape technical and professional editing practices.	PLO Alignment: 4
6	Apply a process-oriented approach to writing, revising, and editing across various writing tasks to meet academic and professional standards.	PLO Alignment: 1, 2

Collectively, these objectives emphasize rhetorical awareness, theoretical engagement, linguistic inclusivity, and process-based approaches to editing. They position technical and professional editing as a humanistic practice grounded in reflection, collaboration, and attention to diverse audiences, languages, and contexts. Though UX is not explicitly mentioned in the CLOs, CLO 6's emphasis of a "process-oriented approach" to editing aligns with our integration of UX into the course. Further, our library partnership helps us enact PLO 4, as students learn to work with various stakeholders. In the next section, we detail how UX pedagogy and experiential learning support students' learning as technical editors in this course.

Technical Editing Course Description and Outline

ENGL 3317 broadens the scope beyond editing skills to include critical analysis of editing practices through sociolinguistic and social justice lenses. ENGL 3317 makes the relationship between technical editing and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) a central, explicit component of the course. The course invites students to define editing through a sociolinguistic perspective, supported by readings such as Melinda Kreth and Elizabeth Bowen's (2017) survey of technical editors, Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller's *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2021), and Natasha Jones's (2016) article on integrating social justice into technical communication. Assignments and activities in ENGL 3317 guide students to critically analyze editorial choices, especially those informed by ideologies surrounding American Standard English and prescriptive editing norms. For example, students not only assess the inclusivity of style guides but also analyze editorial comments through the lens of language ideology and translingual theory. A stakeholder analysis further emphasizes the user experience dimension of editing by encouraging students to reflect on the human consequences of editorial decisions and the diverse identities of authors and audiences. These class readings and activities reflect a broader pedagogical goal of preparing students to become not only skilled editors, but also reflective, empathetic practitioners attuned to the social and rhetorical complexities of language.

As outlined in Table 2, ENGL 3317 is a 16-week course that frames technical and professional editing (TPE) as a humanistic and justice-oriented practice. Each week introduces a key theme—ranging from sociolinguistics and translingual theory to feminist and social justice approaches—paired with corresponding activities, discussions, and assignments meant to deepen students' understanding of that theme. The course moves from foundational definitions and theoretical grounding (Weeks 1–7) to applied practice and client work (Weeks 8–16), culminating in a LibGuide UX project where students collaboratively design and present inclusive, accessible editorial prototypes to the academic library. Given our focus in this manuscript on a UX approach to technical editing, we will discuss the LibGuide UX assignment—and its connecting to TPC scholarship—in more detail in the next section.

Table 2: ENGL 3317 Weekly Overview

Week	Topic	Activities and Assignments
1	**Unit 1: Situating Technical & Professional Editing (TPE) as a Humanistic Practice** Defining TPE, Defining Sociolinguistics	ACTIVITY: Define editing and sociolinguistics ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due
2	Tools & Technologies In TPE	ASSIGNMENT: Defining Technical & Professional Editing DISCUSSION: Writing for global audiences LECTURE: Review writing "in the wild" and analyze how the writing meets the needs of diverse audiences
3	**Unit 2: Theory & Ethics in TPE** American Standard English (ASE) and the Standardization of Language	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion to critically analyze editorial comments through the lens of ASE
4	Translingual Theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion about translingual theory ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due ACTIVITY: Translingualism and meaning negotiation in action
5	Rhetorical theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Rhetorical analysis of editing scenarios
6	Feminist theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Analytical paper #1 due: site study drafting and peer review

Week	Topic	Activities and Assignments
7	Social justice theory and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due ACTIVITY: Analyze and critique examples of editing queries
8	**Unit 3: Analyzing Professional Editing Practices** Editing Models, inclusivity, and sustainability in editing practices	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due
9	Antiracism and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due; analytical paper #2 due: stakeholder analysis drafting and peer review
10	Prescriptive Editing	DISCUSSION: Human elements of editing; critically analyze examples of prescriptive editing.
11	Inclusive Editing and Style Guides	ACTIVITY: Analyze examples of style guides for their attention to inclusivity ASSIGNMENT: Reading response due **LibGuide UX Assignment** ACTIVITY: Affinity mapping LECTURE: Conducting user interviews
12	Plain language movement & accessibility	ASSIGNMENT: Analytical paper #3 due: editorial process analysis drafting and peer review **LibGuide UX Assignment** ACTIVITY: Client panel of librarians and library specialists

Week	Topic	Activities and Assignments
13	Identity, Voice, and TPE	ACTIVITY: Reflect on how identities and experiences shape writing and language use **LibGuide UX Assignment** ACTIVITY: Introduction to Figma Workshop LECTURE: Usability testing
14	**Unit 4: Implications of Editing** Natural language processing (AI), standardization, and editing	ACTIVITY: Reading discussion; in class activity about AI and LLMs ASSIGNMENT: Assignment 1 Part 2 Due: Defining TPE
15	Editing across contexts	ACTIVITY: creative adaptation in editing contexts **LibGuide UX Assignment** ASSIGNMENT: Redesigned LibGuide prototype due
16	**Finals week**	**LibGuide UX Assignment** ASSIGNMENT: Research and prototype presented to library clients

Table 2 provides a weekly overview of *ENGL 3317*'s activities and assignments. Social justice is woven throughout the course; for example, through the LibGuide redesign and DEI style guide revision, students translate UX methods into justice-in-action editorial practices.

We developed the ENGL 3317 LibGuide UX Assignment to center UX pedagogy and inclusive editing. UX pedagogy offers a structured way to teach students how to participate in design processes that result in effective outcomes, or as defined by Guiseppe Getto et al., "an approach to teaching students how to engage in a design process that produces an effective product" (2024, p. 178). This type of pedagogy has been widely used to help TPC students develop communication strategies that are empathetic, inclusive, and accessible (Turner & Rose, 2022) and is therefore well-suited to a technical editing course context. We

begin by introducing students to the concept of UX, which refers to "the overall experience a person has when interacting with a product, program, system, or service" (Sarraf, 2024), particularly within digital contexts. Then, throughout the course, we ask students to apply UX concepts as a vehicle for editing content within digital contexts, such as library interfaces—as is the case in the LibGuide editing assignment.

The LibGuide UX Assignment (refer to Appendix A) exemplifies this pedagogical approach by positioning editing as an applied, research-based, and collaborative practice. Over five weeks, students conduct user interviews, empathy mapping, and usability testing to inform their editorial decisions. Working in groups aligned by disciplinary background, they collaborate with library staff (Danielle) and the graduate student researcher (Madelyn) to revise and prototype redesigned LibGuides in Figma. Through these activities, students learn to apply DEI-informed and plain language style guides, conduct IRB-approved usability tests using Loop11, and justify revisions to clients through evidence-based recommendations. The assignment emphasizes editing as both a rhetorical and ethical practice that requires attention to accessibility, inclusion, and user engagement while fostering professional collaboration and reflective teamwork through deliverables like group charters, iterative drafts, and stakeholder presentations.

Building on existing resources on UX pedagogy in technical editing courses (Carey, 2014; Sarraf et al., 2025), we integrate UX pedagogy into ENGL 3317 as both a method and a result. This approach encourages students to view UX not only as a final product that is user-friendly, but also as an ongoing process that includes "researching users' needs and designing users' interactions with a product or service" (Buley & Natoli, 2024). Understanding UX as both process and outcome helps students grasp how editing decisions—such as those about clarity, tone, and structure—affect user engagement. ENGL 3317 students learn to view editing not just as surface-level corrections to text but as a rhetorical act that shapes how users experience information. Students also learn to distinguish between "usability"—the simplicity with which a user accomplishes tasks—and "user experience," which is defined as "both the design process and the outcome of the design process" (Turner & Rose, 2022, p. 64). Seeing UX as an ongoing process encourages reflection and revision; students can prototype, test, and refine documents or interfaces based on real user data (Turner & Rose, 2022).

Moreover, we enact UX pedagogy in ENGL 3317 through a collaboration that is designed to benefit both the library and the students, enhancing the partner's communication strategies while giving students hands-on learning experiences (Lee, Turner, & Rose, 2023; Sarraf, 2024). A review of 76 publications spanning two decades illustrates the wide range

of UX teaching methods, noting that "experiential learning particularly align[s] with our project's curricular design" (Getto et al., 2024). In this model, instructors introduce real or hypothetical client personas and lead students through UX design processes to develop user-centered solutions. The integration of these types of partnerships in technical editing courses, such as our ENGL 3317 class, can enrich the field of editing to showcase the dynamic, experiential relationship among author, editor, and audience.

Building on our team's earlier work on UX and editing in academic-library contexts (Sarraf, et al., 2025), our approach that integrates UX into technical editing sets itself apart from conventional editing practices by recognizing students as actual users of academic library materials. In this context, our project represents a "collaborative process" that goes beyond standard UX research techniques like interviews and usability testing (Dease, Villaespesa, & MacDonald, 2020). By integrating university coursework with a UX-focused curriculum and including "client-facing projects" where students act as library "clients" and librarians serve as the students' "clients," our pedagogical strategy forms a reciprocal partnership that ties course objectives to the library's website redesign efforts—ultimately benefiting the student population (Dease et al., 2020). In doing so, our work contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions reflected in recent case studies on the implementation of UX strategies within academic libraries (Young, Chao, & Chandler, 2020). These studies highlight the importance of involving end users in the design process, showing how such engagement improves library services and digital platforms (Comeaux, 2017; Dease et al., 2020; German, Grassian, & LeMire, 2017). Our project extends traditional combinations of UX and technical editing by actively positioning students as both users and editors of library content. We ask students to reflect on the technical editor's dual role as both a reader and advocate for the author, helping them understand the significance of user-focused content—especially since they are the intended users. This approach advances a UX technical editing model where accessibility is prioritized throughout every phase of the design and editing process, from the first consultation with library clients to usability testing and final analysis.

Additionally, we prepare students for the LibGuide assignment by asking them to consider social justice as a key aspect of the experiential learning partnership with the library. Before engaging with library content, students read Sam Clem and Ryan Cheek's (2022) "Unjust revisions" and use their heuristic as a model to reflect on their own power, positionality, and privilege. This scholarship orients students to advocate for the end user, as the students themselves *are* library content end users. Further, this approach emphasizes the importance of editing choices as acts of inclusion or exclusion. Prior work

centers technical editing around social justice (Benjamin & Schreiber, 2021), and we combine this focus with experiential learning through the partnership with the library. In the next section, we detail in earnest the ways in which academic library partnerships, like the one we have integrated into our technical editing course, can support both library and TPC social justice goals through a UX approach.

Academic Library: Redesigning for UX and Technical Editing

Given the parallels between academic library priorities and the social justice turn in TPC, a partnership between academic libraries and technical editing students helps both groups realize their goals. This partnership is realized in the LibGuide UX Assignment Prompt (refer to Appendix A). As Rebecca Walton, Kristen Moore, and Natasha Jones (2019) argue, "changes to technologies and procedures are not neutral, and considering those who are already marginalized helps us recognize the effects of technology in meaningful ways" (p. 180). Building on Walton, Moore, and Jones's call for reflexivity in technological and procedural change, the academic library partnership enables TPC technical editing students to engage in iterative, user-centered inquiry and deeply consider the effects of technology on them as student users.

The collaboration between technical editing students and the academic library centered on improving the clarity, accessibility, and usability of the library's digital content. Academic libraries support their mission and related programming through the creation and maintenance of digital content for a specific set of users, primarily students, faculty, and community members, to meet a specific set of objectives, primarily to inform, provide resources and tools, and share knowledge. Digital content is usually packaged into online research guides also known as LibGuides, an application part of the SpringShare portfolio. These research guides "[enable] libraries to create small websites" "for a subject area, a type of user, a tool, or a class" and are widely used throughout the library community (German, Grassian, & LeMire, 2017, p. 162). Our institution's library's approach to the development of research guides has long been characterized by a "more is more" mentality. Library specialists and faculty librarians created digital content for students and faculty users, consulting colleagues at peer institutions and using their expertise in specific subject areas to curate and author their research guides. In most cases, this resulted in a lack of user-centered design with complicated user journeys and low scoring heuristic evaluations. This was due, in part, to an absence of UX culture within the library.

However, the library is not unique in this circumstance. In fact, Scott W. H. Young, Zoe Chao, and Adam Chandler (2020) note that while the field of library and information science is well-versed in theoretical user-centered design principles over the past two decades, the adoption of user experience (UX) methodologies within academic libraries has progressed slowly. Craig M. MacDonald (2017) attributes this slow pace to a myriad of institutional and systemic challenges. Nevertheless, recent literature highlights an emerging trend of case studies that explore the broader implementation of UX practices in academic libraries. These studies consistently emphasize the value in end-user participation in the design process, demonstrating how such involvement enhances the overall effectiveness of library services and programming, including digital environments (Comeaux, 2017; Dease et al., 2020; German et al., 2017). The field of library and information science's interest in participatory design processes make academic libraries an ideal partner for technical editing courses seeking to implement social justice-oriented UX pedagogy.

Thus, the library began a collaborative partnership with the TPC program to develop a scalable pedagogy that was symbiotic in nature while also tackling broader systemic access issues in academia. It simultaneously incorporated UX principles, Learn by Doing initiatives, and teacher-scholar model theories to accomplish two major outcomes:

1. Provide students within the TPC program hands-on experiential learning opportunities in both technical editing and user experience research, focusing on repairing social justice barriers; and
2. Ameliorate the library's digital content through a user-centered approach grounded in empathy, which engaged directly with end-users through the design process.

The pedagogy was designed to introduce UX processes into known research protocols.

Following the internationally recognized Double Diamond model shown in Figure 1, we ensured that the structure of the project followed the four activity phases: discover, define, develop, and deliver (Design Council, 2005).

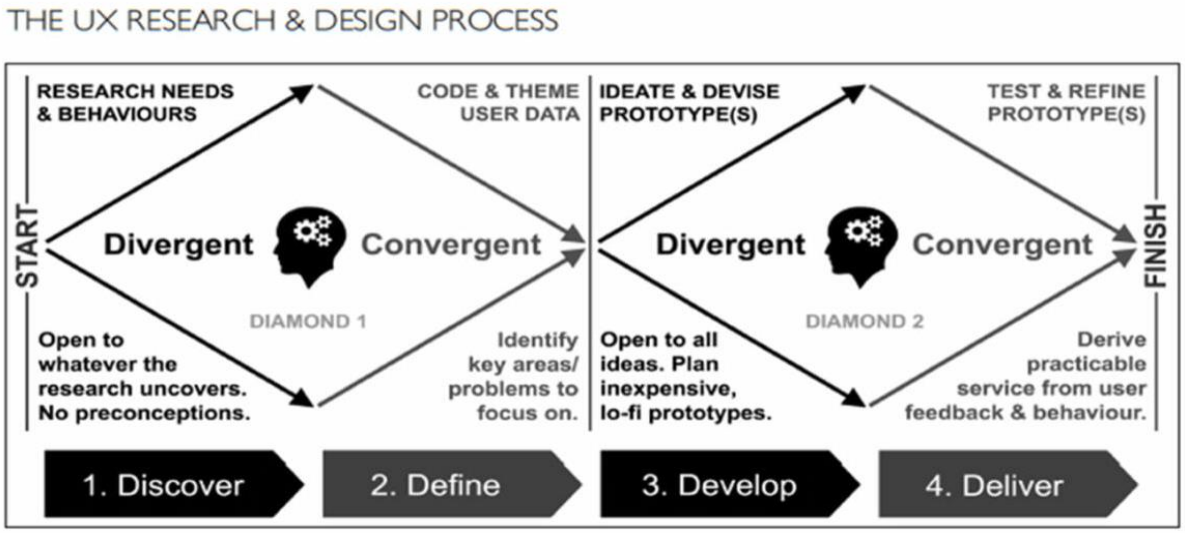

Figure 1. The Double Diamond Framework UX Research and Design. This framework easily breaks down the phases and provides context for each important and interdependent stage. (Design Council, 2005).

Students were introduced to complementing attitudinal and behavioral research methods, the application of affinity mapping to analyze collected data, the process of developing solutions and ideas for improvement, and the iterative approach to designing and testing prototypes. All activities had hands-on components, emphasizing real-world dilemmas and client-based scenarios, as well as introducing industry applications like Figma and Loop11.

Additionally, the collaboration actively supports the library's strategic goals and DEI initiatives. In the most recent five-year strategic plan, the library seeks to "elevate the user experience through assessment, UX strategies, and seamless access," which is reinforced through three major goals:

1. Cultivate a user-centered culture;
2. Enhance UX maturity; and
3. Optimize digital resource access (Robert E. Kennedy Library, 2025).

Overall, the project reinforces Benjamin and Schreiber's (2021) vision of aligning UX pedagogy with accessibility and advocacy within an iterative design process. Through active participation and engagement with student users, the project reinforces the compatibility between UX methodologies and advocacy work, exemplifying user-centered design that focuses on empowering users. This partnership benefits not just the user or the student learning experience, but, additionally, advances the strategic initiatives of the

library through thoughtful and sustainable pedagogy. In turn, the library's digital content evolves to showcase and reflect a continued commitment to serving the diverse needs of its users despite systemic barriers. Our academic library partnership serves as a proof-of-concept, demonstrating how applied collaborations can anchor technical editing education in real-world UX and social justice concerns.

Conclusion

In this piece, we traced how our TPC certificate program integrates user experience (UX) and social justice into our technical editing course through sustained institutional partnerships and experiential learning. By weaving together faculty, librarian, student, and administrative perspectives, we demonstrate how such a partnership can enrich the technical editing course by teaching students to view editing as a user-centered and socially responsive practice. Our evolving model of UX technical editing—grounded in stakeholder advocacy, accessibility, and participatory design—prepares students to work with and for diverse communities.

Based on our experience, we offer the following recommendations for programs seeking to develop similar approaches to teaching technical editing:

1. **Embed social justice explicitly in learning outcomes and assignments**, connecting editing to issues of equity, access, and representation.
2. **Integrate UX research methods into editing pedagogy** to help students center user needs, test their assumptions, and iterate with empathy.
3. **Build sustained institutional partnerships**—such as with academic libraries or community organizations—to scaffold real-world, justice-oriented editing experiences.
4. **Create curricular pathways** (e.g., multiple editing/publishing courses) that allow students to build expertise and pursue editing as a civic, rhetorical practice.

Together, these practices help reframe technical editing not just as skills, but as humanistic work grounded in care, accessibility, and advocacy.

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Appendix A

LibGuide UX Assignment Prompt

Assignment 2: Collaborative Library Editing Project

For this multi-step assignment, you will collaborate with your classmates to edit the library's LibGuides. The goal of this assignment is to create a more accessible, informative, and user-friendly online experience for researchers, scholars, and students accessing the LibGuides.

You will do the following in groups:

- Content revision and improvement of LibGuides
- Rigorous UX research, including interviews and focus group sessions
- Adherence to DEI-focused style guides to create an inclusive end product
- A culminating final presentation showcasing your revised LibGuides
- Use of client profile and supplementary materials provided by the library to orient students to the project and for conducting rigorous UX research.

Here's an outline of the project, which spans 5 weeks:

Week 1: Project Introduction

Our Digital Initiatives and Engagement Librarian (Danielle) and the Graduate Student Fellow (Madelyn) will introduce the project during class time and lecture on effective UX interviewing strategies. You will use the interview skills in your “preliminary interview” assignment, where you interview an ideal user of the research guide to get feedback on the original copy. Also, Madelyn will provide you with a list that categorizes research guides on a 1-5 level of editing difficulty, with 1 being the easiest and 5 being the most difficult to edit. If you want extra credit, you can choose one of the level 5 guides to edit. You will be placed in groups with similar majors.

DELIVERABLES

None

Week 2: Group Charter Memo and Interview Strategies

You will complete an internal deliverable called the "Group Charter Memo," in which you outline your expectations for your group. During class time, you will learn more about effective interview strategies and peer review interview questions.

DELIVERABLES

- Group Charter Memo
- Peer review of interview questions

Week 3: Client Panel and Interviews

The original authors of the research guides (other librarians and library specialists) will visit our class to field questions from you during this session. In the second session of that week, you will complete your user personas, where you imagine a fictional user of the research guides. You then will complete empathy mapping with this user in mind. Danielle and Madelyn will visit again during this session to cover usability testing more thoroughly. By the end of this week, you will complete your preliminary interviews, where you gather information on the original version of the research guide, which you were assigned to edit.

DELIVERABLES

- User persona
- Preliminary interviews

Weeks 4 and 5: Editing, Usability Testing, and Presentation to Client

Weeks 4 and 5 are dedicated to technical editing instruction, specifically. You will read the Federal Plain Language Guidelines website and the ACS Inclusivity Style Guide and generate an informal style guide to use in your library editing projects. Using this knowledge, you will create a prototype of your research guides using the software Figma, which enables both you and the client to visualize your proposed changes on the library page. You will be given a prototype in Figma that adheres to our institution's branding guidelines. You will add your content to the template but will also have the freedom to make design changes like adding text boxes, changing photos, and

rearranging the document design elements. You will submit a draft of your edits in Figma for feedback from Morgan.

To evaluate the initial edits incorporated in your prototypes, student groups will conduct at least one usability test with a key user outside of class time, with extra credit offered for securing additional participants. The usability testing protocol was reviewed and approved by IRB at Cal Poly. You will use Loop11, a qualitative research tool that records usability testing sessions and provides detailed analytics and data visualizations based on the recording. To encourage high engagement, you will offer usability test participants $25 gift cards, funded by the grant for this project (Danielle will send you the gift cards to distribute to your participant). The test will include five initial demographic questions, one to three tasks determined by your group, three follow-up questions related to each task, and four concluding questions about the overall usability experience. Based on the data gathered from these usability tests, you will make a second round of edits to your prototypes before presenting your findings and recommendations to stakeholders.

In the second half of Week 5, you will present your Figma prototypes to the clients. Morgan will lecture on professional presentations beforehand and will emphasize the importance of you justifying any changes you suggest using information from your preliminary interviews and UX testing.

DELIVERABLES

- Draft 1
- Usability test
- Draft 2
- Presentation

Helpful Resources

- Informed Consent for Usability Testing
- Recruitment Materials
- Usability Testing Guidelines Loop11
- Usability Testing Guidelines Analog
- Loop11 login schedule -- sign up here!
- LibGuide Resources from Madelyn
- English 317 Initial Slide Deck

When you're done with the project, please post your final LibGuide here.

Learning Objectives

You will do the following in this assignment:

- Gain practical experience in digital content management, information organization, and user experience design
- Develop essential skills in content revision, UX research, including interviews with end users and focus group sessions
- Apply principles of technical editing to improve website content, navigation, and user experience
- Learn to use findings from UX research to inform website design enhancements and user-centric improvements

Author Information

Krista Speicher Sarraf is an Assistant Professor of Technical and Professional Communication at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where she directs the Technical and Professional Communication Program. Her research draws on the interdisciplinary field of creativity studies to explore how technical and professional communicators use creative thinking to address wicked problems.

Morgan White is a lecturer at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. She teaches composition courses, including technical editing in the Technical and Professional Communication Program. She has co-authored and edited several textbooks and has presented her research on UX, cross-campus partnerships, inclusive editing, and Open-Educational Resources (OER).

Danielle Daugherty is the Digital Initiatives and Engagement Librarian for the Robert E. Kennedy Library at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. As a tenure-track faculty member, her research explores inclusive user experience modeling in academic libraries, with a focus on supporting marginalized communities in digital environments.

Madelyn Cruz graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo with an MS in Engineering Management. She also earned her BS in Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies, with concentrations in Technical Communication and Computer Science: Usability Studies.