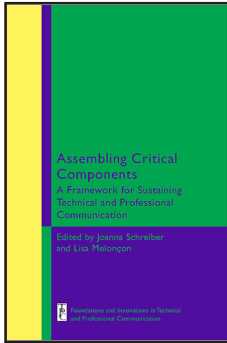


Book Review Editor

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Assembling Critical Components: A Framework for Sustaining Technical and Professional Communication

edited by Joanna Schreiber & Lisa Melonçon

Denver, Colorado

The WAC Clearinghouse;
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A must-read for Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) and Rhetoric graduate students, faculty and SMEs, *Assembling Critical Components: A Framework for Sustaining Technical and Professional Communication* helps answer the questions, “What is TPC? How has TPC evolved? And where is the field going?” Readers are offered a robust overview of the following: defining characteristics of TPC, major foundational concepts that make up the field of study, and finally, an overview of current and emerging areas of TPC focus. In addition to fundamental TPC literature referenced in each chapter, readers are also provided with a veritable who’s-who of rhetoric and TPC by way of citations, bibliographies and, of course, the authors of the chapters themselves.

Part One: Exigency for a Sustainable Identity

This section lays the groundwork for identifying what TPC is and is not. It provides the reader with key literature and mapping of the field – where it has been, where it is, and where it is going.

The first chapter summarizes importance of incorporating pedagogical goals centered around practical application of workplace writing in TPC education. The next chapter reviews the evolution of technical communication research over the last forty years. The author analyzes technical communication journals and identifies trends in the most studied topics. Highlights include a transition from traditional technical communication practices, such as documentation and user manuals, to more contemporary topics like social media and user experience. The final chapter in this section reviews 82 core texts from 60 graduate syllabi in TPC courses. The analysis suggests that technical communication has developed a coherent body knowledge indicating a maturity of the discipline.

Part Two: Reflection and Maintenance of Major Concepts

Here the reader is exposed to more real-life TPC application and is provided with tangible examples and research in the field. Both simple and “wicked” TPC problems are explored here through both a theoretical and applied lens.

Chapter 4 highlights how TPC discourse is considered a distinct field aimed at constraining the excesses of capitalist and regulatory discourses. Chapter 5 explores the difference between descriptive technical discourse and procedural technical discourse, which can help people gain procedural knowledge. These differences are considered through the importance of usability testing of instructions. Chapter 6 emphasizes the importance of providing quality content in a complex information environment, which involves problem-solving within the context of the socio-technical situation.

The final chapter in this section reviews the existing boundaries in TPC artificial divisions throughout research, theory and pedagogy. The chapter closes out discussing how TPC scholars should engage in applied rhetoric to move outside of academia.

Finally, the last chapter in this section reviews the existing boundaries in TPC artificial divisions throughout research, theory, pedagogy, and how TPC scholars should engage in applied rhetoric to move outside of academia.

Part Three: Reassembling with Emerging Relationships

The final chapters of *Assembling Critical Components* provide an overview of modern TPC dilemmas that scholars and practitioners currently face. Across healthcare, accessibility, and global technical communication, current issues that TPC researchers are only beginning to focus on

are featured here. In Chapter 8, TPC scholars challenge dominant medical and scientific discourses. This reading focuses on regulatory documentation, which includes materials used by healthcare professionals in biomedical research and medicinal medical development. Chapter 9 suggests TPC scholarship has not kept current with developments in disability studies. The author proposes ways to grow TPC scholarship include participatory design and participatory action research. Chapter 10 analyzes articles in major TPC journals from 2014-2018 through the lens of transnational research. A greater need for persistent localization and ongoing adaptation is emphasized as a necessary next step in TPC research.

While *Assembling Critical Components* is likely to become and remain a fundamental part of TPC literary canon, there are several instances where this publication may serve particular use. Utilized as more of a reference or by reading the entire book from start-to-finish, *Assembling Critical Components* could either serve as a text in a general course or as recommended reading for newcomers into a TPC graduate program. Like a cookbook or reference guide, there are some texts that remain fundamental to a particular field. *Assembling Critical Components* can easily become a reference or “desk-guide” to TPC professors and scholars who need a quick refresher of a concept or a jumping off point for a class discussion. To that end, specific chapters can easily be assigned to graduate students in a variety of classes depending on the topic.

While TPC Scholars are the primary audience for this collection of densely focused chapters, the use-case for scholars is contingent on where they fall in their career. For first year TPC graduate and PhD students, *Assembling Critical Components* offers eye-opening, and perspective building information about the field that will assist them by providing broad context. Second- and third-year PhD students may find a slightly different use for the material, using it more as a tool to review their coursework to tie key concepts together and solidify TPC fundamentals. A recommended use-case for second- and third-year students is to include this work in their preparation and reading list for qualifying examinations. Given the foundational material required for PhD qualifications, *Assembling Critical Components* serves up much of this scholarly work in an easy-to-read, one-stop-shop manner.

Another recommended audience to consider are students applying to TPC graduate programs. Reading some or all the material in *Assembling Critical Components* would assist applicants in getting a wider view of the field. Furthermore, referencing material from this volume in their application would certainly help to show an understanding of the

key concepts in the field of study and may even enhance the quality of their application.

This resource is incredibly useful for TPC scholars at all points in their careers. It offers readers key concepts, frameworks, theory, and names of important contributors to the field. Each chapter also inspires further academic inquiry and can serve as a jumping-off point for additional research. Key concepts are reinforced and important authors (current and past) to the field are referenced throughout. This collection is especially helpful for students considering and preparing for their qualifying exams and potentially for their dissertation defense.

Melancon and Schreiber have done readers a favor by providing scaffolding upon which to build their TPC knowledge and scholarship. The readings provide foundational and fundamental material in one volume—saving the reader time and money. Students and academics in TPC should not only take advantage of this work, but it should also be recommended reading for all incoming and outgoing PhD students and TPC professors.

Author Information

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