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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Since March, like a lot of other people, I've been staying home more and working and thinking in new ways. What we thought might be over in a month or two, has now dragged into its seventh month without any clear end in sight. Like a lot of other people, in the spring I made sourdough starters and scoured the internet for bread flour and yeast. I also decided it was a good time to learn to play the guitar, Marie Kondo my closets, and tune up my bike. Some of those hobbies have lasted and some have not.

(Hint: my closets are still crammed; the guitar has gathered dust; and the sourdough starters, despite their endearing names, have hit the bin.) Living in a pandemic is no longer novel, though it remains interesting.

Lately, I've been thinking not of how to distract myself but how to apply what I already know to the question of how best to live in the COVID era. What can the critical study of texts, from news reports to Victorian novels to contemporary video games, offer during this latest pandemic in the Anthropocene? Of course, I've spent more time than is healthy on the news and the latest pandemic data on the internet. To get some distance from the now, I've read (and listened while biking) to a broad array of fictional and historical texts, mostly related to our current moment. The critic Caroline Levine reminds us that one function of art is defamiliarization, its ability to "show us anew those parts of our lives that we have too easily taken for granted."

My reading tends to confirm



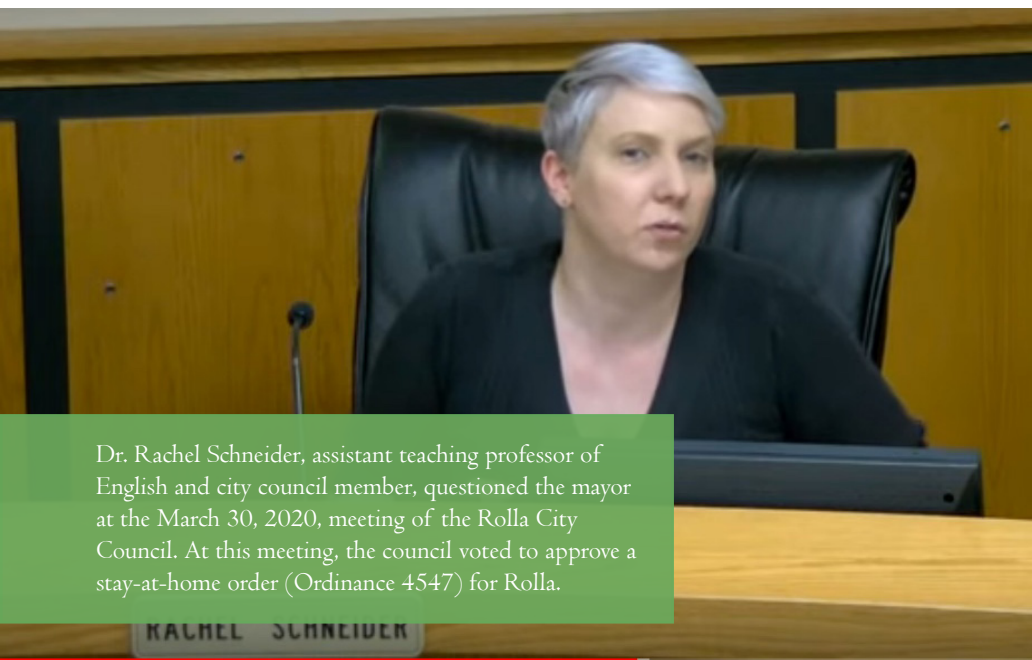
this idea. I've re-read Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, which starts with a quarantine and uses contagion as a governing metaphor. I read Dan Hill's *The War of the Roses*, which covers a particularly bloody and chaotic period of English history punctuated by plagues and contagion. I read Emma Donoghue's *The Pull of the Stars*, which takes place in a Dublin hospital during the Great Flu (and War) of 1918; Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet*, set during the Black Death of 1580; and C.A. Fletcher's *A Boy and His Dog* at the End of the World, a post-apocalyptic novel that I had to put down when the dog was kidnapped.

What I gained from all of that is the solace that humans have been through this before and have survived. I know that's not very deep or original. And the truth is probably that the real solace of art is not in the lesson but in the art itself, the sheer pleasure of the prose, the escape into an alternate reality that mirrors our own dimly but with a reassuring arc of problem, crisis, and

resolution.

I'm looking forward in the spring to following the course on pandemic literature that will be offered by Dr. Marie Lathers, our Weiner Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities. I've peeked at her reading list for the course and it looks fabulous. For now, though, I'm turning to a project that I've put off for years: reading the six novels of Anthony Trollope's *Palliser* series. Trollope is a master of balance and calm, who wrote enormously popular novels about believable, flawed, decent people who come through difficulties by doing the right thing. I want to live in that world.

Kristine Swenson, Ph.D.
September 20, 2020



Dr. Rachel Schneider, assistant teaching professor of English and city council member, questioned the mayor at the March 30, 2020, meeting of the Rolla City Council. At this meeting, the council voted to approve a stay-at-home order (Ordinance 4547) for Rolla.

ROLLA IN THE PANDEMIC

By March 2020, people in the United States realized that the coronavirus outbreak in China had become a worldwide pandemic. The number of COVID-19 cases began to rise in New York and several other states, and the fear of this deadly new virus spread faster than the virus itself. Even in states with few cases, such as Missouri, schools cancelled classes or moved them online, and cities and towns issued stay-at-home orders.

To curb the spread of the virus among students, Missouri S&T cancelled its annual St. Patrick's Day celebrations in mid-March. Many students were upset by this decision. "I was personally disappointed because it was going to be my first ever St. Patrick's Day at S&T," said Joy Amponsah, a graduate student in technical communication from Ghana. A few weeks later, though, the gravity of the situation sank in when S&T moved all its classes online and sent most students home.

The public schools in Rolla moved their classes online as well, and the Rolla City Council issued a stay-at-home order. Residents were supposed to stay at home from April 6 to May 11, except when they were engaged in "essential activities."

Most stores in Rolla implemented health-safety measures, such as mask requirements, and reduced their hours of operation. Some had to close temporarily because they relied on Missouri S&T students for their business. Many people worked from home; some were furloughed or laid off.

During the lockdown, there were fewer cars on the streets and highways in Rolla. When people did go out, they usually wore masks, and they stopped shaking hands with friends. Commodities such as toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer were in short supply.

Mary Russell, a graduate student in technical communication from Columbia, MO, stayed in Rolla during the lockdown. "The major change in my routine was not going to campus on a daily basis to attend classes and use the library."

Agaba Ame-Oko, another graduate student in technical communication, had moved from Nigeria to Rolla in December 2019, so he was just getting used to Rolla before the pandemic. During the lockdown, he began wearing a mask and practicing social distancing. Stores such as Walmart and Kroger had fewer hours of operation, but he was still able to buy what he needed.

Before the pandemic, Dr. Ed Malone used to go to Panera every day for two or three hours to drink coffee and grade assignments. The coronavirus put an end to this daily ritual, and from late March until early August, he seldom left his house. He turned his dining room into an office and taught his classes from there.

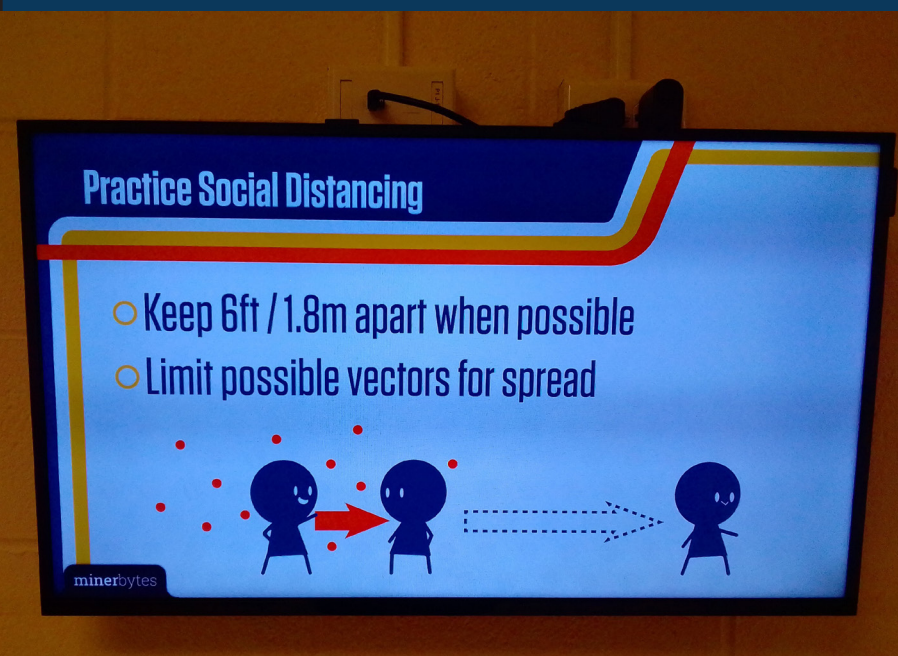


NORTHCUT APPOINTED VP OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Several weeks into the Spring 2020 semester, Dr. Kathryn Northcut, professor of technical communication, was appointed interim vice provost for academic support at Missouri S&T. She had to transition abruptly from classroom teaching to full-time administrative work. Drs. David Wright and Carleigh Davis took over her courses already in progress.

In her new role, Northcut is now responsible for many areas of academic affairs. She oversees several departments, including S&T Advising, International Affairs, Student Design Center, Experiential Learning, the Honors Program, and student support services such as the Writing Center, Student Success Center, and Student Veteran's Resource Center.

She is tasked with ensuring that student support services directly improve Missouri S&T's retention and graduation rates. She handles all reported violations of the academic code of conduct involving undergraduate students. Her new administrative role, she says, is "great because I'm developing a managerial skill set, but I definitely miss the interaction with students that I enjoy when I'm teaching."



COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES IN ETC DEPARTMENT

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, the university and our department implemented security measures on the top floor of the Humanities-Social Sciences (H-SS) building. Signs were posted to remind students, faculty, and staff to wear masks, wash their hands frequently, and practice social distancing. A hand sanitizer station was placed in the hallway near the door to the ETC suite, and a bottle of hand sanitizer was left on the receptionist's counter for visitors to use. The entrance near the receptionist's desk was blocked by a red velvet rope

suspended between two stanchions. All visitors were expected to wait in line behind the rope until they were called. In keeping with social-distancing guidelines, "stand apart" stickers were placed on the floor at six-foot intervals. A plexiglass shield was installed on top of the receptionist's counter. Many desks were removed from H-SS classrooms to maintain a six-foot distance. Stickers on the floor marked where each desk should be. The capacity of H-SS 201, for example, was reduced from 40 to 12 students during the pandemic.



Celtic Pipkin

CONCERN FOR OTHERS IN A PANDEMIC

The spring 2020 semester was abruptly interrupted by a deadly new virus. In late March, professors were forced to move classes entirely online. A new pass-fail grading option was implemented for that semester. Missouri S&T had to delay its in-person graduation ceremonies for spring and summer graduates until the end of the year. About 50 percent of the Fall 2020 classes were fully in person, while about 20 percent were blended (partly online and partly in person) and about 30 percent were fully online. In so many ways, COVID-19 affected the lives of each student, staff member, and faculty member of this university.

A senior majoring in technical communication, Celtic Pipkin said

that, when S&T's St. Pat's celebrations were cancelled in spring 2020, the gravity of the situation began to set in for him. Like other students and faculty at Missouri S&T, Pipkin learned to adapt to the changes placed on the university as a result of COVID-19. The school did not require students to be tested before returning for the fall semester, but they were expected to quarantine in Rolla for up to 14 days, depending on whether they were arriving from an international destination or a U.S. location. When he was interviewed in early September, Pipkin said, "My roommates and I live in a house on campus in Rolla where we've been quarantined, and our classes are all online, so we don't travel much."

Even though he had been in quarantine, Pipkin decided to get tested during the first week of school for the safety of others, including his own family. "Before I went home to celebrate my birthday, I figured I'd get tested to make sure I wasn't a threat to anyone," he said. Being tested for the virus was quite an experience. "I actually conducted the test myself." CVS in Rolla was his testing location. He went through the drive-thru where a bag was given to him through a slot at the window. Pipkin was directed to swab each nostril for 15 seconds. After putting the cotton swab in its container, Pipkin placed it into the original bag and handed it back to the person monitoring the test. This test was unlike any other he had taken.

Fortunately, Pipkin received negative results the following week, which allowed him to return safely home to celebrate with his family. Pipkin continued taking every precaution to ensure the safety of himself and those around him by wearing a mask and sanitizing his hands frequently. Although the circumstances were not ideal, Pipkin tried to remain optimistic about the school year and his new life during the pandemic



MINER PLEDGE

Dr. Dan Reardon, associate professor of English and associate department chair, took the Miner Pledge in August 2020. In his role as an official Miner Pledge Ambassador, he urged other faculty and students to do the same. As the Fall semester began, the Miner Pledge was a way for each of us to demonstrate that we wanted to protect Missouri S&T and the Rolla community from the ravages of COVID-19.

I Pledge to:

Protect myself:

- Monitor myself daily for symptoms of COVID-19 before coming to campus
- Take my temperature daily before coming to campus
- Notify covid@mst.edu if I have symptoms of illness or a fever
- Wash my hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer

Protect my campus:

- Wear a face covering in classrooms and inside buildings when social distancing is not possible
- Maintain social distancing in my daily activities
- Stay home when sick and follow advice from covid@mst.edu
- Respect the space of others and encourage healthy practices
- Participate in health screenings and testing, if advised

Protect my community:

- Represent S&T in the community and lead by example
- Support and encourage my peers in healthy behavior
- Limit group sizes to minimize my number of contacts
- Consider the health and safety of each participant
- Limit my travel outside the area to essential activities



Vivian Barnes, a GTA, at the library

TEACHING AND LEARNING TOGETHER IN THE RESTRUCTURED GTA PROGRAM

For over a decade, our department has employed some MS students to teach ENGL 3560 Technical Writing and TCH COM/ENGL 1600 Introduction to Technical Communication. In the past, these graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) were given full instructional responsibility for one section of a course each semester. In any given semester, there were typically six GTAs on the payroll.

In Fall 2020, our department was able to fund fourteen GTAs to teach two sections each. For the first time in the department's history, some GTAs are teaching sections of ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation and ENGL 1160 Writing and Research in addition to ENGL 3650 and TCH COM 1600.

The nine GTAs teaching ENGL 1120 in Fall 2020 were essentially managing classes for the first time, cutting their teeth as instructors during the height of the pandemic. But they were not alone. Helping them were Dr. Carleigh Davis, assistant professor of technical communication, and Dr. Josselyn Larson, assistant teaching professor of English. Davis is the director of the GTA program, and Larson is an experienced composition teacher.

Even though they were teaching half-time, the GTAs were still required to enroll in three courses (9 credit hours) and give adequate time to their own studies by attending classes, completing assignments, and maintaining good grades. Effective planning and time management were keys to efficiently managing these responsibilities. As one GTA explained, "I keep two calendars: a Google calendar and whiteboard where I plan activities for the week every Sunday. I try to be detailed enough to highlight the entire week's work before Monday so I can keep track of what needs to be done and when."

Teamwork among instructors was crucial. One GTA said, "For 1600, because I'm with Dr. Davis and Dr. [Dan] Rear-don, we tend to bounce video recordings off of each other. If one of us already had a video done, we may just use it for all the sections."

The department is fully committed to providing the necessary enabling environment for the GTAs to continue to function effectively as teachers and succeed as students.



Desmond Adu Brempong, a GTA, preparing material for a class



NEW GRADUATE COURSE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In interviews with department faculty, several alumni mentioned that a course in project management was missing from the technical communication curriculum. Our department heeded their advice by creating a new graduate-level course, TCH COM 6420 Project Management in Technical Communication. The course was taught for the first time in Fall 2020 by Dr. David Wright, who emphasized the interrelatedness of project management and technical communication: “Project management is just one of those things that seems to go well with tech com because it is so communication intensive.”

Future offerings of TCH COM 6420 will be open to all graduate students on campus as well undergraduate students enrolled in the accelerated BS/MS program in technical communication. Students enrolled in the accelerated program can take up to 9 credit hours of 5000- and 6000-level coursework that counts simultaneously toward both BS and the MS.

A primary goal of TCH COM 6420 is to prepare students to eventually take an exam to become a Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM). The CAPM is an entry-level or foundational certification that is accredited by the Project Management Institute (PMI).

To take the exam, a person must have a secondary degree (e.g., a high school diploma) and 23 hours of project management education. The contact hours in TCH COM 6420 will easily fulfill the 23-hour requirement.

How important is project management in our interconnected world? Consider Wright’s shoemaker analogy. The shoemaker of the past was a professional artisan who did everything from sourcing the leather to fastening the sole. Today, our manufacturing processes are more complicated. Shoes may be sourced in India, but the assembly takes place in China. The parent company of the shoes may be in a completely different country, which adds complexity to business regulations.

Project management has increased in importance because of the need to manage complex process flows and implement cost savings in an interconnected business world. TCH COM 6420 will provide technical communication students with a baseline of project management principles that are applicable to this environment.

ENGL 2002 REINVENTED

In fall 2020, Dr. Kristine Swenson, Dr. Carleigh Davis, and Dr. Sarah Hercula joined forces again to team-teach English 2002 Critical Approaches to Literature. Working together, as they did fall 2019, the three professors taught different yet complementary units on literature, linguistics, and technical communication. English 2002 will eventually be given a new name and will serve as an introduction to the various disciplines that comprise our department.

One of the goals of the course revision is to show students, predominantly non-department majors, how the different courses offered in the ETC department can contribute to their individual interests and career goals. Connecting the disciplines of literature, linguistics, and technical communication is part of a department-wide trend. For example, in TCH COM 5620 Research Methods, taught by Davis in fall 2020, there were added opportunities for students to engage with all three disciplines.

“We’re thinking of 2002 and 5620 almost as ‘bookends’ to the different degree paths offered in the department,” Davis said. “If ETC majors start with 2002 and end with 5620, they should get the breadth of understanding that will allow them to situate their area of study within the broad umbrella of English studies. The depth of understanding in their particular area of focus will come from the specific courses they take in between these two courses.”

In English 2002, Swenson taught the literature unit in the first third of the semester. In the second third, Hercula taught the linguistics unit, in which students conducted some research in sociolinguistics. And in the final third, Davis taught the technical communication unit, which required students to develop and implement a strategy for communicating their research findings to audiences.



Dr. Josalyn Larson's at-home "studio classroom"

ENGLISH 1120 REDESIGNED

English 1120 Exposition and Argumentation is the introductory English course for incoming students at Missouri S&T. This course has been undergoing redesign since 2018, when our department began revisions to the course objectives, structure, and major assignments. Dr. Daniel Reardon, Professor Elizabeth Roberson, and Dr. Josalyn Larson, with the assistance of MS student Beth Reardon, co-designed the new version of English 1120 to shift the course focus toward preparing students to write in digital environments.

Before the redesign, English 1120 was focused on the "reading, thinking, and writing processes associated with academic discourse." Course objectives included critical thinking for reading, writing, and speaking; vocabulary development; sentence composition; the writing process; and research skills. After the revision and a course pilot in Spring 2019, the new version of English 1120 focuses on the "rhetorical nature of writing" with course objectives including developing professional ethos, writing and communicating in digital environments, using credible evidence, and writing for specific

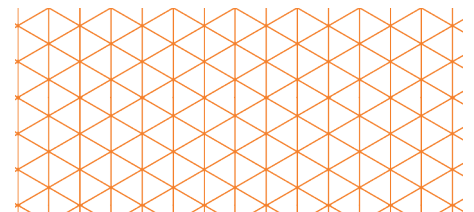
purposes. While both versions of English 1120 were designed to develop students' writing skills and critical thinking skills, the newest iteration of the course centers around adapting to the rhetorical demands of an increasingly digital professional world.

This focus has become even more important due to the changes at Missouri S&T in response to COVID-19. Dr. Larson explained that the preparation leading up to the fall 2020 semester was unusual, because "we knew there was a pandemic happening, but at the same time we knew that some students weren't comfortable with the online classroom environment, and international students had face-to-face visa requirements." As a result, the English and Technical Communication department adopted a "hyflex" model, which gives students both online and in person learning opportunities. The goal of hyflex courses is to meet students' needs in an efficient manner that caters to their individual learning styles without having to design multiple different courses simultaneously.

The newest version of English 1120 is a hyflex course, offering all course content

online while also giving students the opportunity to attend in person workshops that take place during their scheduled class time. Due to capacity restrictions, workshops are limited to small numbers of students and provide enrichment content to the material being taught online.

According to Dr. Larson, the biggest challenge with hyflex courses, especially when teaching freshmen, is the feeling of disconnect that can occur without regular in-person interaction: "When they're in the classroom with us, as instructors we can see if they're struggling. We can read non-verbal cues and address them. In a digital environment, it's harder to chase those students down and it takes extra effort on our part to make the students feel seen." The workshops being offered by each professor are an attempt to remedy this issue, giving students the option to have in-person interaction in a safe environment.





TEACHING IN THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19, a global pandemic, spread to over 200 countries, creating strange and unprecedented circumstances. These uncertain times were made more uncertain by the shift to teaching and learning in online environments, but at least one instructor approached the challenges with great flexibility and positivity: Dr. Carleigh Davis, assistant professor of technical communication.

What effects has COVID-19 had on education in general?

“It’s been a challenge; there are a lot of issues to think through, especially accessibility for students; students should be our priority. I believe that COVID-19 has exacerbated some problems and highlighted some things we weren’t as aware of as we should have been in the past. One of the problems has been internet access. Once everything moved online, there was some kind of assumption that all students had internet access and would be able to just shift easily. That was not the case. We found out which students in our classes were going to the library until 2:00 in the morning because they didn’t have reliable home internet access, or students who were sitting in a car in public parking lots working on class assignments because that was the only way they could do that.

“One of the things to keep in mind is that we can’t just assume that students

have the same resources and the same homework environment. In the long-term, COVID-19 is going to force us to be a little more critical of our teaching practices and a little more aware of the lived realities of students. The silver lining in all the chaos is being brought to bear and being accountable for these kinds of choices.”

How would you describe your experience of teaching during the pandemic?

“Teaching during the pandemic has brought about managing a lot of different expectations at once. It takes a lot of innovation and creativity to make it work well. Overall, teaching during the pandemic has been exhilarating, a lot of work, and very rewarding, especially getting to watch students adapt along with you. You get to see that students are really invested in the course work. The experience of moving online taught me to see that students really see the value of the course and want to be there. Students stayed on top of their course work, and their commitment was evident. Even when problems like the big storm that came up towards the end of the spring semester, students were not using their perfectly valid excuses; instead, they were finding ways to stay in touch and on top of their course work, which I found to be amazing.”

What challenges did you face when you switched from an in-person classroom to an online classroom?

“The biggest challenge with the switch was timing and adjusting the course format for a course that was planned in person. You do not design an online course the same way you would design an in-person course. You plan different kinds of activities and structure the lessons a little bit differently because students should be allowed time to switch between online activities, to contact you and to give feedback if they fall behind. The biggest challenge was having established an in-person pattern with the students and then all of a sudden having to make the whole course shift and then, in the online format, trying to finish the things that should have been done in person. Most of my classes are workshop and discussion heavy. When I teach an in-person class, it is easy to give information, have students work, walk around to give feedback, and step in to manage the discussion, but in an online environment, I have to set things up in little chunks. For example, in my tech writing course, we were working on usability testing and recommendation reports when all the switch was happening.

“When taking students through the

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sections of a recommendation report in an in-person classroom format, I would usually introduce the section and ask them what that section is supposed to do, based on their experience, and reading on the resource they have already done. I will give them some time to work and then we come back together. It's kind of very minimal content, but a lot of heavy interaction. When I move online, I have to get all the content into little videos that students can interact with and put into practice. That is so much more time consuming than just walking into the classroom and leading the discussion. In the classroom you can see what is happening, and then you react to it in a moment, but when I am preparing videos for an online class, I have to anticipate what the students might struggle with and prepare for a few different eventualities that may be true for some students and not true for others."

Do you feel your online classes are engaging? What strategies have you put in place to ensure this?

"To ensure that online learning is engaging, the most important thing is that students get consistent feedback and know that their work is being seen and recognized. When I teach a fully online class, rather than a few really big projects, I prefer to do a bunch of smaller projects that all kind of fold together and go into the bigger assignment. So, the bigger assignments end up being collecting things and pushing them together, rather than generating a bunch of new content. Smaller assignments let you see individually as the instructor where each student is, the kind of work they are doing, how they are engaging with contents, any mistakes that they are making, but also what they are doing really well. It is important to name those things for the students, so that they don't feel like they are getting a form or generic responses. They can tell that you are paying attention to them. I think that makes them want to pay more attention to the course.

"The other thing is making the course easy to navigate, in terms of Canvas or the medium used to deliver the contents. If it is difficult to find what you need, the students aren't going to want anything to do with it because it's exhausting. Simple, streamlined, visually



Dr. Davis in class during the spring semester

engaging Canvas courses are one way to head off the boredom at the beginning.

"Also, respecting students' time. Staying away from things that feels like busy work, and letting them see the connection and application of everything they are doing in class. Students shouldn't feel like they are doing something to fill the day, but what they are doing has clear

Online teaching and learning versus in-person teaching and learning: how would you rate the two?

"Online and in-person both have their constraints. The most important thing is to recognize those constraints, and you don't try to treat them like they should be delivered in the same way. I certainly see the benefits to in-person instruction. A lot of students respond well to in person instruction, they engage well in person, and a lot of teachers engage better in person. But I don't think that we can ignore the fact that when online teaching is done well, and all the accessibility issues are addressed well, online instructions can be a lot more accessible and a lot more personalized than in-person instruction.

"As a society, that is really something we need to pay attention to. There is a reason why we have some equity issues

when it comes to access to the internet, access to resources that students need to do online instruction. That is something we need to pay close attention to as a society. But as instructors, we also need to think about the ways to implement these great technologies that we have, these great systems that allow us some more flexibility, and allow students some more flexibility. I am excited to see where that goes. I think it is absolutely worth studying, and I think this horrible situation is a good catalyst for innovating."

Do you feel our department needs to do more to make online teaching and learning better?

"Our department has always been strong with online instruction. We have a lot of brilliant pedagogues in our department. We have engaged instructors who have been practicing with this for a long time. So, I think just trust the teachers, and trust the students. Our department has great students. I am not worried about our ability to get through this at all. The team in our department work really well together and are really supportive of one another. I think that is probably all we need."



On September 9, Dr. Dolan met with some of her students near the entrance of the Curtis Laws Wilson Library.

ZOMBIE LITERATURE IN THE PANDEMIC

While most English and technical communication courses migrated to online-only formats during the pandemic, one English professor was determined to safely conduct in-person meetings in spite of the pandemic. In Fall 2020, Dr. Kathryn Dolan taught ENGL 3327 American Gothic: The Zombie Apocalypse as a hybrid course—that is, partly online and partly in person.

On Mondays and Fridays, the meetings were online, but the discussions and presentations on those days—mostly within the text chat feature of Zoom—were still spirited, Dolan said. On Wednesdays, she met with her students in person, on a rotating basis of one third of the class at a time. Many of those meet-

ings took place outside when the weather permitted, and Dolan said that she was diligent in making sure masks stayed on and students stayed over six feet apart.

“In my mind so far, this hybrid method is really coming pretty close to what my classes have always looked like. There are the little lectures/slide presentations, group presentations and individual presentations, and the delightful chats and discussions over the texts. They’re just happening in slightly different chunks.”

Margaret Schuey, one of Dolan’s students, understood the risks of being in contact with others. To alleviate her anxiety, she had both the official COVID test and the antibody test. She described them as “uncomfortable but not painful.”

During her first semester at Missouri S&T, Schuey was thrown headfirst into pandemic pandemonium. She described herself as “not a traditional college student.” She has a house and a job. Although new to Missouri S&T, she had been taking college classes on and off for about ten years.

“I’ve gotten used to online classes. I used to hate them, like hate them, hate them, hate them. I couldn’t keep up. It was awful! But now I’m starting to like them. I like being able to stay home; I get a little more done.”

Schuey didn’t know she was taking a “zombie class” until the first meeting. Originally, the course was advertised only as “American Gothic.” She was pleasantly surprised by the theme and its relevance. The course made her think about the similarities between the zombie literature and films she was studying and the 2020 pandemic.

“The course is designed to give us a place to play around with all of our hidden (and not so hidden) fears,” Dolan said. “And in the case of this offering in particular, it’s so timely. Everyone is thinking about global pandemics, big protests in the streets, trusting/not trusting one’s own government. In some ways, our texts are giving us a chance to discuss some social issues of concern right now.”

Both Schuey and Dolan found ways to keep busy and entertain themselves during the pandemic. For Schuey, it was audiobooks and Netflix. Dolan took up gardening, a worthy hobby for a food studies scholar. However, she had to battle a pesky crop-eating woodchuck in her yard. At least it wasn’t a brain-craving zombie.



Dr. Dolan talking to students



IN QUEST OF LINGUISTIC EQUALITY

What language do you speak? For most reading, the answer is an easy one: English. But for linguists the intricacies, prestige, and stigmas associated with the way you are taught to speak offer insight into the issues facing America and the world today. For Dr. Sarah Hercula, one such linguist at Missouri S&T, the inequality of English dialects such as African American English (AAE) is an issue she is trying to help solve.

“I actually came to linguistics because I encountered a problem with my teaching. My undergraduate degree is in English education and right when I graduated, I got a job teaching English in Michigan and I was primarily a teacher of students who spoke African American English: AAE. Those students were really struggling in my class and I was struggling on how best to teach them, given that they were speakers of a dialect I was unfamiliar with,” Hercula explains.

Hercula ended up leaving this teaching position after one year. However, the challenges she faced in the classroom sparked a fire that would lead to her attending graduate school at Illinois State University and earning a PhD in English with a specialization in linguistics. Hercula extended what she learned and studied through years of analysis in her new book, *Fostering Linguistic Equality: The SISE Approach to the Introductory Linguistics Course*.

SISE stands for Structural Inquiry of Stigmatized English. Hercula said that, when the SISE approach is applied to the classroom, “the idea is that students learn some of the features of stigmatized dialects and that forms a scientific basis for them, a structural basis, upon which we can build when we go later on to talk about more social issues and to talk about linguistic inequality and its effects.”

“Students, I think, benefit from the kind of deep dive into the facts, the truth of language variation, before they then build on an understanding of how people’s misguided understandings about language diversity can impact people negatively. It avoids the ‘cheerleader effect,’ where you learn about something and think, ‘Hey, yay, I’m not going to do this anymore,’ and that’s the end. Instead, my approach grounds that understanding and offers a true investigation into the dialects themselves, which the students can use as evidence to support their ongoing interactions with language variation.”

In her book, Hercula talks about important moments in history and real-world examples where use of stigmatized language was to the detriment of individuals of entire races, genders, or sexual orientations. Hercula also covers how some dialects, or dialectical features, are coveted while others are seen as erring. Hercula notes, however, that in language there are no prestigious or

stigmatized features:

“I have a little saying: ‘The language is innocent.’ What that really comes down to is that, when we as language scientists look at particular dialects and look at the linguistic features, we learn that all languages and dialects are linguistically equal. They are all systematic and rule governed, those rules just vary from dialect to dialect. But while those dialects are linguistically equal, they are not socially equal. What that means is, when people attach certain levels of prestige or value to certain dialects, it has much more to do with the social factors of the people who speak those dialects than it does with the language itself. Many people like to think that there is some deficit to the language, and they like to point to some issue with the language, that there’s certain features that aren’t linguistically as good, for one reason or another, as ‘mainstream English.’ But the truth, and this is a hard truth, is that certain dialects are stigmatized because the folks who speak them tend to be stigmatized as well. It has to do with their associations racially or culturally or even geographically.”

Hercula mentions in her book instances where stigmatized perceptions of certain dialects were used to the detriment of others. One example she brings up is in the trial of George Zimmerman where Rachel Jeantel, a close friend of the

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Fostering Linguistic Equality

The SISE Approach to the Introductory Linguistics Course

Sarah E. Hercula

Continued from page 11

late Trayvon Martin, was discredited and ridiculed because of her dialectic features. (In 2012, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin, but was later acquitted of all charges in the case.)

“I feel like in the midst of our cultural moment that we are in right now, with Black Lives Matter, #metoo, etc., regular people are fed up and are ready to do something about inequality. This is an even more important moment to something that has always been important, and we need to bring language into that conversation. There’s no way to fix racism without fixing linguistic bias. There’s no way to fix sexism without addressing that women’s language is denigrated more than men’s language. There’s no way to fix homophobia before we talk about stigmas about, for example, Gay Man’s English. All the systematic inequality that we are seeing, language is an integral part of it. What we also find is that people progressive in their views on things like race, gender, and sexuality, still hold very prescriptive views on language. They see language as something different, ‘you can’t change your race, but you can learn a new language.’ But truthfully, it is not that simple, you cannot ask someone to quick-change their language.”

The strain that language inequality places on the education system cannot be overstated. Many children across the

country are in the same position that Hercula and her students were in when she was teaching high school: prejudice against the way they use language. Furthermore, college is the first area for many where the ability to learn about linguistic inequality becomes available.

“We have a term in education called the ‘achievement gap’ and what that describes is the fact that students who come from stigmatized backgrounds, whether that’s racial, cultural, or linguistic, tend to score lower on these tests and are given fewer opportunities in school than students who are born into socially privileged backgrounds. I talk in my book about how these students are sometimes placed into remedial courses or special learning courses. That means by the time they’re in high school they aren’t the ones taking AP courses or getting college preparation. Instead they fall further and further behind. That gap is something we see between white students and nonwhite students, or linguistically privileged students and linguistically stigmatized students... If you want to fix the achievement gap the first thing you have to do is focus on the language difference and how you’re educating about it,” Hercula explains.

Sadly, the achievement gap and its effects have been felt for decades, especially when racism was a lot less subtle within the education system. Students in elementary school are taught the features

of a mythical language known as “standard English” while outside the classroom there is a menagerie of dialects being spoken and blended.

“I can imagine a world in which all of us are trained throughout our K-12 about language diversity as a positive and are trained on intercultural communications instead of standard English with learning how to successfully talk with other people who sound different from us, with becoming better listeners in conversations where people come from different linguistic backgrounds and in gaining an understanding of the facts of linguistic variation,” Hercula remarks.

But implementing change into a beast such as the U.S. education system has historically proven to be challenging, to say the least. Hercula believes that students who learn about linguistic inequality now can be the ones to foster and implement a better system. Hercula knows that her book will not solve the problem, but she hopes it can give instructors and students the tools to become better communicators and linguistically empathic. When asked about why students should develop an interest in linguistics and apply the lessons SISE can teach, she states:

“The more you know, the better you can act. None of us are bad people for living in linguistic bias; we are socialized into believing them. But the more you learn about it, the more responsibility you have to fight against that bias and to work towards bettering your responses to other people when you encounter linguistic diversity. If you’re someone who maybe is remaining unconvinced about the impact of linguistic bias and linguistic discrimination and how tough some folks have it, another argument for developing linguistic empathy is that our world is becoming smaller and smaller. The more globalized our world becomes, the more we are going to have interactions with people who speak differently than us.... This is the time, the place, the moment, the opportunity.”

Dr. Hercula teaches ENGL 3001 A Linguistic Study of Modern English. Her new book will be used to teach this class, and she hopes other courses around the country will do the same in their introductory courses. To learn about all the courses she teaches, visit her faculty page at <https://english.mst.edu/facultyandstaff/hercula/>



CSTS members in a meeting

DR. SWENSON AS DIRECTOR OF CSTS

Missouri S&T has nine research centers. Of those nine, the Center for Science, Technology, and Society (CSTS) is unique because of its humanistic focus. The CSTS consists of “researchers and students from disciplines across Missouri S&T who work together to address critical issues raised by technical innovations and problems from a global, human-centered perspective.”

The interdisciplinary field of science, technology, and society has a long history, with scholarship from at least the 1930s. The field became a formalized academic discipline in the 1970s. Missouri S&T’s CSTS was formed in 2017, and its first director was Dr. Kathleen Drowne, professor of English and current dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Business (CASB). Since August 2019, Dr. Kristine Swenson, professor of English and ETC department chair, has been the director.

The CSTS’s mission is to critically assess the practice of science, the process of creating scientific knowledge, and the implementation of technology within society. To achieve this mission, Swenson said, “The CSTS advances research in areas where science and society in-

tersect and supports work that presents scientific and technical ideas to general audiences. The Center fosters creative intellectual collaborations among those in STEM fields, humanists, and social scientists by bringing together diverse perspectives to solve problems of practical importance, conceptual significance, and broad societal concern.”

As CSTC director, Swenson is responsible for scheduling, running, and setting the agenda for two meetings every month; making arrangement for visiting speakers for meetings; handling membership and budget for the center; awarding and managing seed grants; attending campus meetings for center directors; writing annual, and other reports as requested; keeping track of center awards and external funding; managing the center’s website; supervising the administrative assistant’s work.

Reflecting on her first year as director, Swenson said that she hopes she has been able to help facilitate greater collaboration across disciplines at S&T by helping to create networking opportunities and seed grants for research groups.

NEW GRADUATE TRACK PATHWAY APPROVED

An exciting new option: an accelerated master’s degree program. This program, one of several Graduate Track Pathway (GTP) programs on campus, allows a student to start working on the MS in Technical Communication during his or her senior year.

To be accepted to the program, the student must have a 3.5 GPA or better in at least 9 credit hours of English and TCH COM courses plus at least a 3.0 overall GPA. Upon completing 90 credit hours of undergraduate coursework, the student may apply for admission to the MS program in technical communication at futurestudents.mst.edu/admissions/graduate. After applying, the student should contact Dr. Daniel Reardon to complete the accelerated program admission form.

Once accepted to the program, the senior may take up to three TCH COM courses (or 9 credit hours) that will count toward both the undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Professionals with an MS in Technical Communication currently earn an average salary of \$70,000, according to payscale.com. This is about \$10,000 more, on average, than a professional with a BS in Technical Communication or a BA in English makes.



Dr. David Wright, associate professor of technical communication, and Martha Bentil, a graduate student in technical communication, work on a project related to smart-home technology.



Graduate Teaching Assistants, September 2020. From left to right: Oluwafemi Osho, Femi Alademehin, Vivian Barnes, Acheme Acheme (far back), Desmond Adu Brempong (center, standing), Taylor Schubert (center, sitting), Mariter White, Agaba Ame-Oko (leaning against the wall), and Joy Amponsah. Not pictured here: Kenneth Bansah, Martha Bentil, Manushri Pandya, Daniel Ochekwu and Mary Russell.

MEET THE GTA'S IN ETC

Acheme Christopher Acheme

Acheme earned a bachelor's degree in electrical and electronics engineering from the University of Agriculture, Makuridi, Nigeria. Early in his career, he worked at four different IT companies as a salesman, an instructor, and a network engineer. Later, he founded Printon (a print-on-demand web solution for individuals and small businesses). Acheme thinks of himself as a solution provider and dreams of not only building a sustainable print business but also supporting small businesses in Africa to achieve their maximum potential. He has a lovely wife and enjoys playing and watching soccer. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Femi Alademehin

Femi earned a bachelor's degree in electrical and electronics engineering from the University of Agriculture, Makuridi, Nigeria, and worked as a credit personnel and investment banker at Guaranty Trust Bank in Nigeria. He enjoys traveling and adventure. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Joy Amponsah

Prior to starting graduate studies at Missouri S&T, Joy completed a BS in Economics at the Central University in Accra, Ghana, and worked as a Data Analyst for Safety & Environmental Research Consultancy Limited in Ghana. She is currently one of our two depart-

ment representatives on the Council of Graduate Students. Joy enjoys singing, cooking, reading, and travelling. In fall 2020, she taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Agaba Ame-Oko

Agaba earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria. He spent a few years teaching at a university before enrolling at Missouri S&T for a second graduate degree. Beyond academics, Agaba loves community interactions and keeps a close watch on political activities of interest. His favorite pastime is soccer, which he plays sometimes, and watches as often as he can. If he were not a teacher, Agaba would have been a farmer. He dreams of owning a farm some day—a dream he may as well make a retirement plan. He believes it would be nice to wake up every morning to a serene environment with exceptionally clean air. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Kenneth Bansah

In addition to a BS, MPhil, and PhD in Mining Engineering, Kenneth has an MS in Geological/Geophysical Engineering. His work experience includes a lecturer position at the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, Ghana; Engineering/Environmental Consultant at Safety & Environmental Research Consultancy Limited, Ghana; and a graduate research

assistant in the Department of Mining Engineering at Missouri S&T. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 3560 Technical Writing.

Vivian Barnes

Vivian is one of the department's representatives on the Council of Graduate Students at Missouri S&T. Prior to joining our department, she earned a BS in Actuarial Science from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, and an MBA from the University of South Wales, Wales, UK. She worked for close to 10 years in the oil and gas industry as a drilling fluids specialist for Halliburton Ghana Limited. Aside from teaching, Vivian is a Marketing Peer Wellness Educator for Miner Wellness. She loves travelling and exploring new places. She also loves cooking, especially trying out new recipes. In fall 2020, she taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Martha Bentil

Martha has a BA in Publishing Studies from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, and an MBA in Banking and Finance from Bologna Business School, Italy. Before coming to S&T, Martha worked as a Branch Manager at Group Nduom (GN) Bank in Ghana. In fall 2020, she taught ENGL 3560 Technical Writing.

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Desmond Adu Brempong

Desmond has a bachelor's degree in information technology from the Ghana Technology University College in Accra, Ghana. He is the Public Relation Officer of the African Student Association (ASA) at Missouri S&T. He enjoys playing soccer, video games, and recording music. In fall 2020, Desmond taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Daniel Ochekwu

Daniel has a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and extension from the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria. He is a social development and education enthusiast who has overseen several projects relating to education, economic empowerment, health, and well-being. Prior to joining Missouri S&T, Daniel worked at Teach for Nigeria as a Leadership Development Manager and served as an Ambassador of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for TeachSDGs. During his time at Teach for Nigeria, he co-founded the Mentor an African Child Initiative (MACI), an NGO with a vision to create access to opportunities in ICT, leadership, and mentorship for children from low income communities across Africa. Daniel enjoys engaging young minds, helping them see the big picture, and encouraging them to go after their dreams. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

Oluwafemi Osho

For ten years, Oluwafemi taught cyber security science at the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria. Prior to this, he headed the IT/Systems department at one of the leading mortgage banks in Nigeria. A Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH), with expertise in cybersecurity, privacy, and trust, he has a bachelor's degree in Mathematics/Computer Science and a master's degree in Mathematics. He is a member of several reputable associations, such as the Global Commission for the Stability of the Cyberspace Research Advisory Group (GCSC-RAG), Cyber Security Experts Association of Nigeria (CSEAN), and Internet Society (ISoc), and a fellow of the Nigerian School on Internet Governance. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.



Daniel Ochekwu, a GTA, working from home

Manushri Pandya

Manushri graduated from Gujarat University, India, with a BA in English Literature. Her previous work experience includes an internship as an IT technical writer with Cytokinetics in San Francisco, CA. In fall 2020, she taught ENGL 3560 Technical Writing.

Mary Russell

Prior to her joining the our department, Mary earned a BA in English and an MA in Teaching from Columbia College, Columbia, MO, and worked in both the non-profit sector and the Missouri Senate. Outside of her classes and GTA responsibilities, Mary manages an Airbnb in a historic farmhouse and enjoys hiking and kayaking. In fall 2020, she taught ENGL 1120 Exposition and Argumentation.

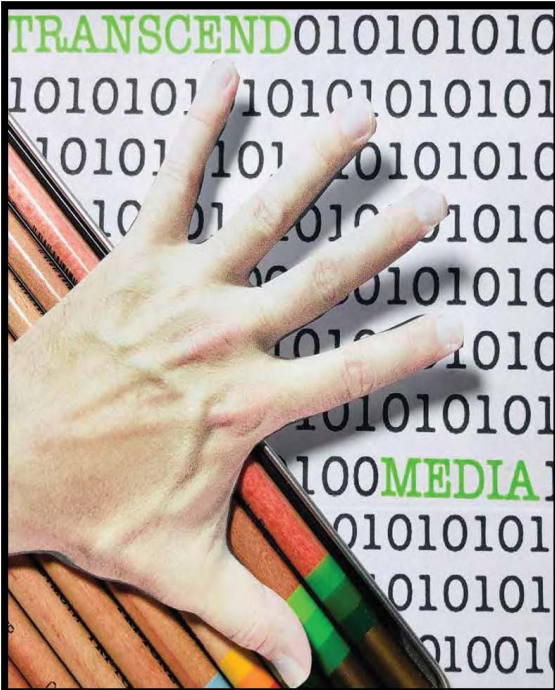
Taylor Schubert

Taylor started his education at Missouri S&T in 2015. Since then, he has served as Personnel Director on the Executive Board for KMNR 89.7 FM, Secretary for the Undergraduate Student Leadership Council, member of Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, and Technical Editor for the Office of Graduate Studies. In Spring 2018, he graduated summa cum laude with a BA in English and is

currently working on an MS in Technical Communication. When not in classes or instructing his students, Taylor has worked as a cook and eventually sous chef at the St. James Public House Brewery. In his free time, he enjoys listening to music, playing *Escape from Tarkov*, and spending time with friends and his faithful chocolate labrador Luther. In fall 2020, he taught ENGL 1160 Writing and Research.

Mariter White

Mariter is the current president of the Missouri S&T chapter of the Society of Technical Communication (STC). She has a BS in Technical Communication from Missouri S&T and is working on an MS. In her free time, she writes short stories and enjoys playing video games. As well as being a GTA in our department, she is also a graduate research assistant (GRA) in the Department of Psychological Science. The paper she is working on is about why people are adopting smart home systems and their reactions to those systems. In fall 2020, she taught TCH COM/ENGL 1600 Introduction to Technical Communication.



SERVING AS GUEST EDITORS OF AN ACADEMIC JOURNAL

Professors Dan Reardon, David Wright, and Ed Malone served as guest editors of the August 2019 issue of *Technical Communication*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Society for Technical Communication. They discuss the project in the following interview.

Q: What are guest editors?

Wright: “A journal typically has a regular editor who coordinates the peer-review process and makes the final decisions about accepting or rejecting articles and then works with contributors to prepare their manuscripts for publication. A guest editor relieves the regular editor of these duties for a single issue, usually an issue with articles on a common theme. That’s why it’s referred to as a special issue.”

Q: What was your special issue about?

Malone: “The title of our special issue was ‘Transmedia, Participatory Culture, and Digital Creation.’ Transmedia refers to storytelling or some other activity that extends across different media such as

graphic novels, movies, digital games, and posters. The activity usually involves collaboration and interaction among producers and consumers in digital environments. Think about how the story of Spiderman is told, but also think about how the CDC communicates pandemic-related information through videos, brochures, infographics, etc.”

Wright: “Our special issue has an introduction and six articles on a range of topics—from a virtual ‘workbench’ for working on a musical instrument to the Facebook page of a popular weight-loss program to collaboration among player-developers in gaming communities.”

Q: How did you become guest editors of this special issue?

Reardon: “The idea for the issue was born over coffee at Panera. All three of us had done some research and writing about transmedia, and I was deeply immersed in research on transmedia relating to the game studies course I was developing.”

Malone: “The editor of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* sent out a call for proposals for special issues. We decided to submit a proposal. Dan suggested the theme of transmedia communication, and we went with it. Unfortunately, the editorial board chose a different proposal. But this didn’t deter us. We revised the proposal and sent it to the editor of STC’s *Technical Communication*. A few weeks later, we were soliciting manuscripts for the special issue.”

Q: Why is this topic important for tech com professionals and for students?

Reardon: “Transmedia is both the past and the future of communication. Consumers who used to access information in only one format can now consume that same information in multiple ways through different mediums. Technical Communication professionals need to be aware of how their communication changes in these different formats and media.”

Q: What do you believe are the highlights of the issue?

Malone: “The articles in the special issue explore the different content-flow logics of storytelling, branding, playing, working, and learning across media and genres. For example, one article discusses a safety training program for Navy pilots during World War II. The program featured a misfit pilot, Dilbert, and his mechanic sidekick, Spoiler, in related stories told through posters, films, magazine columns, poems, aircraft nose art, a doll used in demonstrations, a dunking machine used in exercises, and shaming rituals. Another article about ‘Next-Gen Resumes’ discusses a young professional’s use of transmedia storytelling on LinkedIn as a career-building strategy.”

Q: How did you divide up the work for the special issue?

Malone: “Each of us wrote a section of the introduction. Dan was responsible for the nine paragraphs in the introductory section, David for the five paragraphs in the middle section, and I for the six paragraphs in the final section. It was something like tag-team wrestling.”

Reardon: “Each of us, I think, brought particular strengths to the issue. I contributed my understanding of current research in transmedia studies. Ed and David found the connections between transmedia and tech com. Ed is also an expert reviewer and editor. The issue’s polish owes much to Ed’s eye for detail.”

Q: Did you encounter any difficulties?

Wright: “We did. One contributor withdrew from the project at the last minute and left us hanging. We had to scramble to find a replacement article for the issue.”

Malone: “We didn’t have much control over the layout of the issue or the cover art. When we received the first round of page proofs, we saw the words transcend media on the journal’s cover. We interpret transmedia to mean ‘across media,’ not ‘beyond media.’ There’s nothing in the issue to support the transcend interpretation. So we were a little perturbed. But the publisher said that the cover art was the artist’s interpretation, and he wouldn’t change it.”



LINDA SANDS RETIRES AFTER 44 YEARS

Linda Sands, the department's long-time business support specialist, retired from full-time employment in July. She shared the following account of her 44-year career at Missouri S&T.

"I had just graduated from Owensville High School. I knew I wanted a position at UMR because of its quality of instruction, plus the good benefits it offered. I started in October 1976 as a part-time stenographer in the Department of Engineering Mechanics, which developed into a full-time position in 1978. It was during my first week that I picked up a call from someone named, 'Merle.' When I asked for a last name, he said 'Merle Baker, the Chancellor.' I was mortified. He was nice, understanding, and a bit humorous, thank goodness. Needless to say, that did not happen again.

"This initial appointment allowed me to work with some of the finest engineering professors on campus: Dr. Robert L.

Davis, later Dean of Engineering; Dr. H. Dean Keith, later Dean of Technology Transfer; and Dr. Myron Parry, later Provost—to name a few. My duties were varied, such as taking care of the front desk and calendars and typing up tests with formulas using every Greek symbol you could imagine. I had quick hands switching the IBM electric typewriter font balls!

"After a few years in Engineering Mechanics, I moved into a senior secretary position in Personnel Services where I assisted the director with confidential correspondence and department financials and managed all aspects of the hiring and payroll support of all temporary support staff on campus.

"My next position was Administrative Assistant for the Dean of Extension and then Academic Extension, where again my duties were with financials, correspondence, coordinating speakers, and setting up meetings. In the meantime, I started taking classes at UMR.

"For the next eleven years, I was a coordinator in Student Financial Aid, where I managed the campus Federal Pell Grant program and the extensive Federal Work Study program on campus. I also coordinated the prestigious Chancellor's Scholarship and conducted workshop presentations at area high schools for parents with incoming freshmen who were interested in financial aid opportunities.

"I finally completed my BA in English in 1993, graduating magna cum laude.

"My final full-time position for 16 years was in the English and Tech Com department as a Business Support Specialist II. My position duties included all Peoplesoft department financials, grants, scholarships, expense reports, ePAFS (personnel action forms), payroll, and time and labor, as well as managing the office. Managing the office was huge, with many duties too numerous to mention. My fellow Business Support Specialists will know exactly what I mean. Luckily, I had some very talented student assistants to help out.

"When I started the position in ETC in 2004, there were only a handful of professors, but the department grew by leaps and bounds, especially with a new technical communication program. The first two chairs I worked with were Dr. Larry Vonalt and Prof. Gene Doty, now both sadly deceased. Dr. Kris Swenson is the current chair and is quite fair and supportive of all.

"Retirement had been on my mind for several years, so I decided to retire in July 2020. Now I'm part-time in the ETC department, which gives me a couple of free days each week to enjoy my horses, do some fishing, traveling, and just smell the roses a bit.

"Over the years, anyone who has been in my office could see that I love horses. My husband and I have raised over 100 quarter horse foals in the past 30 years. A high percentage of these youngsters were by world champion, leading sires in the quarter horse industry and bred to our blue-ribbon broodmares that happen to be well bred, successfully producing show mares. With that combination, we were fortunate to be breeders of many big champions at prestigious shows such as the Quarter Horse Congress, AQHA World show, and National Snaffle Bit Association (NSBA) events.

"Our newest addition is a young bay weanling filly by Lazy Loper, an AQHA world champion and leading sire. We have high hopes for Maggie later in the show pen. In the meantime, I'll be riding Chip, her dam, around our farm on my off days.

"To tell you the truth, life is pretty good right now!

MS ALUMNA BEGINS PHD PROGRAM AT VIRGINIA TECH

Priyanka Ganguly, affectionately known in our department and among her friends and colleagues as “Priya,” comes from Kolkata in eastern India, more than 8,000 miles away from Missouri. She comes from a well-educated family with a dad who works as a marine engineer, a mum as a homemaker with a degree in philosophy, and a brother (her only sibling) as a software engineer. Priya is married to Shouvik Ganguly, a PhD candidate in mechanical engineering at Missouri S&T.

With her family’s motivation, Priya took up the challenge to study for her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in botany at Calcutta University in India and worked in both India and Canada in human resources and customer services. Priya was clear about her educational path and knew she would continue her education in scientific or technical writing.

When she arrived in Missouri in 2017 to join her husband, she learned about Missouri S&T’s technical communication graduate program, and in 2018 she received admission to the program, along with a graduate teaching assistantship. She received training from the department and taught ENGL 3560 Technical Writing over three semesters.

Many international students on campus face the challenge of rapidly transitioning to the American teaching and learning environment and keeping pace with their academic work. In countries like Ghana, Nigeria, India, and many more, students typically take one or two exams and submit a few homework assignments. In the United States, however, students complete assignments, quizzes, and in-class activities on a weekly basis in addition to major projects and/or exams—an arduous situation for international students.



Priya had to brave these challenges in addition to learning how to communicate with her students. She agrees that the technical communication graduate program is intense and challenging for international students, but quickly suggests that it is doable with the right attitude and motivation. She says that each technical communication professor has unique skills and teaches courses that provide a strong theoretical and practical foundation for students.

Unlike many who see writing as daunting, Priya considers herself to be a “voracious writer.” Her thesis advisor, Dr. Ed Malone, attests to Priya’s ability and diligence. “I told Priya that her thesis needed to be at least 60 pages, so she wrote more than 200 pages. I have no doubt that some chapters from her thesis will be published in peer-reviewed journals. We expect great things from Priya.”

Priya hopes to derive at least two peer-reviewed journal articles from her master’s thesis titled “Rhetorical Analysis of Statements of Purpose (SPs) for Admission to Graduate School: A Shared-Understanding Perspective of the SP Genre.”

In late 2019 and early 2020, Priya received offers from PhD programs at several top universities in the United States. She accepted the Virginia Tech offer, which included a tuition waiver, teaching and research stipends, health care insurance, and conference travel funds.

She quickly shared the good news with her thesis advisor.

In Fall 2020, Priya and her husband moved to Blacksburg, VA, where she immediately began work on her Ph.D. She expects to complete the program in record time. Some interesting books she read in the first few weeks as a PhD student were *Angels’ Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and Rhetorics of the Everyday* by Ralph Cintron and *Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research* by Robert Kozinets.

She is teaching a course in engineering communication to sophomores and juniors in materials science, and she attributes her preparedness for this work to the training and support she received from technical communication faculty at Missouri S&T. She says she “will forever be grateful.”



GRADUATING IN A PANDEMIC

From left to right: Amy McMillen, Stephen Buechter, Jasmina Mehanovic

The COVID-19 pandemic led to furloughs and layoffs as well as fewer job opportunities around the country. After years of hard work in school, graduates of our BA, BS, and MS programs entered the worst job market since the Great Depression. Some already had jobs; others went on to graduate school; some are still searching.

Pursuing Higher Education

Chloe Francis graduated in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in English. She had hoped to find a job after graduation, but soon realized that wasn't possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic. About midway through the spring semester, when everything was moved online, she realized how difficult it would be to find a job. She filled out a bunch of applications, but did not get a response from anyone. According to Chloe, "it was just difficult finding anything at that time."

She made a choice to get her master's degree in technical communication and hope for a better job market in a year or two. After talking to her academic advisor, Dr. Reardon, about her interest in applying for the master's program in Technical Communication, she put in an application and was accepted. Chloe applied only to Missouri S&T because she was already familiar with our department and comfortable in Rolla, where she already had an apartment. For her, it was just easier to stay in Rolla than to go someplace else.

Taking Advantage of Student Work Experience

Jasmina Mehanovic graduated in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in technical communication. She counted it a blessing that she had been hired by Missouri S&T's IT department in February before her graduation. Jasmina had been a student IT worker for about six years before she was hired full time. Currently, Jasmina works as a Business Support Specialist on campus

"I wear a lot of different hats, as it's a bit of a hybrid role," Jasmina said. "My IT role entails work on a knowledge base. In my technical communication role, I help create a lot of processes for documentation."

Jasmina admits that she applied for other jobs in Spring 2020, but the market was a lot more competitive as things started to close down and move online. "Because I was already in the IT family, I had an interest to stay."

Actively Seeking Job Opportunities

Sumina Nasrin, originally from Bangladesh, is a May 2020 graduate of our MS program in technical communication. She feels very proud to have completed her degree. "Technical communication is a relatively unusual major; many universities in the U.S do not offer this major, and I am very happy I studied in this program."

COVID-19 has not spared any industry, and like many other recent graduates,

Sumina is actively searching for job opportunities. "Since graduating I have put out a lot of applications. I wake up in the morning, and my job now is to look for opportunities and make myself more fit for employment. I get really excited when my skill set matches the job, but it is also depressing when I get rejected."

Sumina shares the same worries about COVID-19 and the current job outlook. Besides looking for jobs in technical communication, she is also considering teaching jobs, since she was a graduate teaching assistant for two years in our department.

The current situation has taught Sumina that, whatever the decision is, you need to learn and cope with it. She has the following advice for students and graduates seeking job opportunities:

"Make good use of the online experience that the pandemic has presented. Seek internships to build your experience while in school. Finally, create professional networks, learn beyond the curriculum and engage in volunteering activities."

Enhancing a Career

Amy McMillen is a Senior Academic Advisor for the Engineering and Computing Science department at Missouri S&T. She graduated in May 2020 with a master's degree in technical communication. She worked full-time on campus while pursuing graduate studies, completing a graduate certificate before the MS.

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FINDING LOVE AND HAPPINESS AT MISSOURI S&T

Hannah Ramsey-Standage began work on a political science degree at the University of Louisville, planning to become a lawyer one day. A difficult roommate and other problems affected her health and prompted her to leave Kentucky. In Summer 2015, she returned to Rolla, her hometown, to work on a bachelor's degree in English at Missouri S&T.

Hannah's return home would come with many benefits. She re-joined her family, who loved and cared for her, and her Rolla friends. Hannah had the opportunity to work in Missouri S&T's marketing department to improve her writing. She wrote an article for the *Missouri S&T Magazine*, a publication for alumni and other stakeholders in the university. She was also involved in theatrical programs in Castleman Hall.

Most importantly, while at Missouri S&T, she met and married Chayne Standage, a computer science major who graduated two years after her.

After graduating with her BA in English in Fall 2018, Hannah stayed in Rolla while waiting for her husband to finish his degree. During this time, she worked two full-time positions: as an executive assistant at the Community Partnership, a non-profit organization serving the

needs of several Missouri counties, and as an instructional developer for Mizzou Academy, an online high school operated by the University of Missouri's College of Education. The instructional developer role was more closely related to her field of study. She assisted K-12 teachers who wrote curricula for the online high school. She designed Canvas sites for the students who took those courses.

Hannah "loved being part of the English program." She speaks highly of the faculty. "Dr. Dolan, Dr. Bryan and Dr. Reardon are always willing to hear feedback from students and change their approach when or if needed. Dr. Reardon is one of the biggest assets to the students. He always makes time and goes over and beyond for his students. He was my advisor and I never had to worry about meeting a requirement or staying on track to graduate."

Hannah recently moved to Colorado with her husband. She hopes to find a job like the one she had in Missouri S&T's marketing department. She remains passionate about returning to university communications to use her writing skills and to drive and advance the communication of campus research and events with the public.

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She aspires to stay at S&T and move up.

Amy feels good about getting a master's degree and believes her degree is really going to be valuable and open doors for her. "I am blessed that I absolutely love my job. I am blessed that I already had a job when the pandemic started and didn't have to go out and try to compete in this job market."

In her current position, Amy's main goal is to be an advocate for students and keep them on that critical path towards degree completion. If she were to leave her current position and move somewhere else on campus, she would like to go to Career Opportunities and Employer Relations. "I get to work with students when they start their academic studies; that's what I do now. Just as much, I would like to help them find their dream jobs when they are ready to leave S&T."

Finding an Alternative

Stephen Buechter is another May 2020 graduate in technical communication. He is hoping to find an entry level position in technical writing to get some experience and then move up to higher ranking writer positions.

Since graduating, he has been actively searching for jobs, and reaching out to some of his contacts. "I am mostly doing online job searching because that is the easiest thing to do. That is what's sort of available," Stephen said.

In the pandemic, he feels it's a lot harder to get a job. According to Stephen, "it feels like there's still opportunities out there, but also there's a ton of competition for every opportunity, which makes it a lot harder than I expected."

He believes in enhancing networking skills. "I feel like if I knew more people, then I would have potentially had a better shot at getting out and knowing about how to directly apply for openings," Stephen said. "People say it all the time, but it's true: you want to expand your network as much as possible because that will increase your opportunities a lot down the line."

Stephen is considering applying for a part-time job, but he is not giving up on finding full-time employment. Stephen was secretary (2018-2019) and president (2019-2020) of the S&T student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

Drew Jones is a senior studying technical communication and a cadet with S&T's Air Force ROTC Detachment 442. In March 2020, in-person classes were moved online due to COVID-19. This transition was easy for some students (and professors), but it was much harder for others. Drew's mid-semester transition was easy; half of his classes were already online or mostly online. His favorite part was being able to create his own schedule. "I was able to focus on my personal growth—eating well, exercising, and scheduling enough time for homework," he said. However, the transition did impact his ROTC experience significantly. They had to cut many activities, and no training could be done in person, which meant that each individual cadet was accountable for his/her own training.

One big difference between the spring and fall semesters is that everyone is now more comfortable being in online synchronous and asynchronous classes. "The nature of technical communication is to be virtual," said Drew, who enjoys the flexibility in schedule that online classes offer him. Although he is not struggling this semester, he feels for students in the harder engineering classes and labs that have 50 or more students.



FOCUSING ON PERSONAL GROWTH IN A PANDEMIC



Drew also works at The S&T Store (i.e., the campus bookstore) where he has noticed some big changes over the summer. He said it has been unusually quiet, and he suspects the biggest reason for this is that there are fewer students on campus to come in and shop in their free time. The UM System's push for instructors to use online textbooks may also be contributing to lower numbers of customers.

"My only concern going forward is that students learn to take this seriously. While our department [ETC] is easily able to handle the online transitions, many other departments on campus are suffering," Drew said. "My AFROTC experience now is so much more complicated than it was last fall, and I fear that we might not be able to produce the high quality officers that are expected of us. As long as we can stay on campus, then we can do our jobs. If students lose focus and choose to compromise the safety of others, we'll have to find compromises in our training as well."

Drew has made his home at Missouri S&T with the English and technical communication department, but he is looking forward to graduating in spring 2021.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN ETC

Our department has three student organizations: the Missouri S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the Missouri S&T chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, and the campus literary magazine Southwinds. Because they are all located in our department, these organizations have similarities, but they are all worth joining for different reasons.

Sigma Tau Delta is an international English honor society. Missouri S&T's Alpha Gamma Mu chapter was formed in 1993. Literature is a strong focus in this student organization. Each semester, the members choose a book and its movie adaptation. Members read the novel on their own; then they get together to watch the movie adaptation. Each week, the members choose a shorter piece of literature, such as short stories or poetry, to read and then discuss during the following meeting.

The Brown Bag Series has become very popular since its start in 2018. Each month, the organization holds a Brown Bag event that features the research of one faculty member in the department. On April 29, 2020, for example, Dr. Dan Reardon talked about his collaboration with Dr. Malone and Dr. Wright on a study of the digital game *Mass Effect 3*. This series gives students a chance to better understand their professors and their passions and interact with them in a new way.

Humanitarianism is yet another focus of the Alpha Gamma Mu chapter, which holds several events each year to raise money for local charities. The chapter often participates in Banned Book Week on campus. Dr. Dolan has been the chapter's faculty advisor for many years, and the current president is BA student Keilynn Johnson.

The Missouri S&T chapter of the Society for Technical Communication



ETC majors at the STC Region 6 Conference in Springfield, MO. From left to right: Celtic Pipkin (guest), Priya Ganguly (vice president), Tristan Dauer (secretary), William Reardon (guest), and Stephen Buechter (president).

(STC) was formed in 2011. A major focus of this organization is building its members professionally. STC releases webinars on a variety of subjects relating to technical communication and even has its own job bank for members. The university's chapter watches the webinars together and occasionally hosts guest speakers.

For example, on Feb. 24, 2020, Michael Buechter gave an in-person presentation titled "The Pen Is Mightier than the Calculator: Writing in Civil Engineering." Mr. Buechter is a program manager with the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District and the president of the St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Professional Engineers.

Since 2011, members of the local STC chapter have attended the Region 6 STC Student Conference, held annually in Springfield, MO. Some members have presented research posters at the conference and participated in panel discussions. They have also had the opportunity to meet major technical communication scholars, such as Mike Markel, Carolyn Rude, Sam Dragga, and Kirk St. Amant.

The STC chapter officers for AY 2020-2021 are Mariter White, president; Acheme "Chris" Acheme, vice president; Martha Bentil, treasurer; and Taylor Schubert, secretary. The organization's faculty advisor is Dr. Ed Malone.

Southwinds is the creative arts magazine for Missouri S&T. For the past several years, Dr. Cotterill has been the organization's faculty advisor. Due to her retirement, Professor Mathew Goldberg is assuming the role of advisor. Glad Labrague is both the president of the group and the lead editor of the magazine.

All students and faculty members at Missouri S&T are encouraged to submit their creative pieces to the magazine. The magazine accepts poems, stories, photographs, and drawings. Typically, there is a fall contest in which the members of the organization judge the submissions and choose winners for each creative category. Students do not need to be English and technical communication majors to join the staff of Southwinds, so students should embrace their creativity and take part in this organization.

ETC majors should take advantage of these student organizations to acquaint themselves with other people in the department and to keep up with the new happenings in their fields of study. These organizations give students experience with volunteering, networking, editing, and much more. Reach out to the faculty advisors or presidents to learn about how to join Sigma Tau Delta, STC, and Southwinds.



6 FEET. 6 FEET. 6 FEET. 6 FEET. 6 FEET. 6 FEET.

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