Herbert B. Michaelson, who passed away last year, was a major figure in the histories of the IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS) and the Society for Technical Communication (STC), joining both groups in the 1950s and remaining active in them for decades. He worked as a full-time editor and manager in industry for almost 40 years. As a scholar, he had an extensive publication record (see bibliography). Few practitioners or academics in technical communication have been as productive or active as he was for so many years.

Herbert Bernard Michaelson was born in Washington, D.C. on December 29, 1916, the son of Samuel and Minnie Michaelson. His parents had emigrated from Russia in the 1890s, becoming citizens by 1900. Herbert grew up with two older sisters and a younger brother in a bilingual environment: Yiddish and English. He attended primary and secondary schools in Baltimore and New York.

From 1943 to 1946, he served in the US Army Signal Corps, specializing in microwave radio communications. He attended Temple University (1943), Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (c. 1950), and eventually New York University, earning a B.A. in physics in 1955. He worked as a technical editor for Sylvania (1946-1956) and IBM (1956-1984). For many years, he was an associate editor of the IBM Journal of Research and Development. After his retirement in the mid-1980s, he continued to work part-time as a technical communication consultant.

Michaelson was also a photographer and had a one-artist show at a gallery in the mid-1970s. The New York Art Yearbook described his work as “Wall constructions that combine large black-and-white photographs with mechanical audio devices. The sounds, activated by the viewer, are appropriate to the visual images. For example, a blow-up of an old table radio has a plastic knob, which is turned to play back a segment from the Lone Ranger; or in a picture of a car interior, a horn is sounded by pushing a button on the steering wheel.”

Contributions to PCS
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Herbert B. Michaelson, a charter member of PCS who passed away last year, left behind an impressive record of publications, including two books and at least 40 full-length journal articles. The bibliography below was an attempt to compile a complete list of Michaelson's publications. It is at least nearly complete.

Books


Articles: Science and Technology

1944: Gas-filled and vacuum capacitors. Electronics, September, 124-127, 320, 324, 228, 332.

1948: Metallic-ion emission in vacuum tubes. Sylvania Technologist, 1(3), 11-16.

1950:
- Variations of grid contact potential and associated grid currents. Journal of the Franklin Institute, 249(6), 455-473.


1954:

1955:
- Biographical appreciation: Oliver B. J. Fraser. Metal Progress, 68(1), 84-86.


1977:
- The work function of the elements and its periodicity. Journal of Applied Physics, 48(11), 4729-4733.


**Articles: Technical Writing and Editing**

1949:


1957:


1961:
- Creative aspects of engineering writing. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-4(3), 77-79.
- Problems of style and semantics in technical writing. In H. M. Weisman (Ed.).

1962: Editorial notes: Are 50,000 technical magazines too many? STWP Review, 9(1), 2-17


1968:


1981:


1985: How to review an engineering manuscript. Engineering Education, 75(8), 688, 692.

1986:
- Strategic choices for the engineer author. Chemical Engineering, 93(15), August 4, 50-60.
- New York’s scholarship program grows. Intercom, October, p. 2.

1987:


Miscellany


1960:
• The cover. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-3(1), 2.
• The cover. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-3(2), 34.

1961:
• The cover. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-4(1), 2.
• The cover. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-4(2), 34.
• The cover. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-4(3), 102.

1962:
• Abstracts of recent articles on engineering writing and speech. IRE Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, EWS-5(1), 30.


1968:


1988:
• A handbook of problems words and phrases [by] Morton S. Freeman [book review].
Technical Communication, 35(2), 137.


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