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Johnson-Sheehan within the first few pages of his newest edition of *Technical Communication Today*, 3rd edition states the purpose of the book through one simple line of prose: “In this book you will learn the process of technical communication so you can manage large amounts of information in ways that allow you to take action” (Johnson-Sheehan, 2010, p. 5). He emphasizes the words: process, manage and action which he uses as a framework for the remainder of the text. The pages that follow offer a clear, concise and comfortable introduction to a subject that could otherwise be frightening. Johnson-Sheehan, through an understanding of the advance of the technical workplace has expanded his audience in this edition beyond engineers and engineering students. This edition now also meets the needs of those in the natural, social and computer sciences as well as medicine, public relations, law and business.

Students who use this book will not only gain a valuable foothold on the process of writing, researching and presenting but they will also learn how to effectively manage their way through difficult projects, writers block and the latest technological advances that have been integrated into the workplace environment. Chapter 2, “The Technical Writing Process Today”, teaches how to overcome the initial fear of writing and encourages students to write freely on a daily basis in an attempt to avoid writers block. These tips offer valuable resources to students who might be rusty or new to the process of writing in any other style than expository.

The text returns to its main framework in order to organize the presentation of information. Johnson-Sheehan begins the first few chapters by covering the process of creating technical documents he then moves on to the management of the creation process and finally action.

In the process section of the text Johnson-Sheehan provides an inviting introduction to students who aspire to be practitioners in the field of technical communication. Throughout the pages of the first chapter students can become familiar with the definition, qualities and what a career in technical communication might hold. The remaining chapters in the first section of the book deal with the process of getting started in technical communication. Readers will cover topics such as planning, designing, knowing their audience, working within teams both physically and virtually as well as ethics. The clear and concise organization, graphs, samples and at a glance pull out boxes allows the reader to quickly grasp key concepts on the first pass through the text or when return for review.

Johnson-Sheehan then transitions into a method approach where he offers students the tools and knowledge they will need to create effective documents in the workplace setting. This section of the text covers persuasive arguments, research, organization and drafts as well as document design, graphic selection and editing with the user in mind. Without an adequate understanding of how to craft, display and understand a user’s needs an otherwise essential message will be missed or ignored. The content in this section, more than a quarter of the text, can serve to be some of the most valuable to students and deserves the amount of attention that Johnson-Sheehan has given it.

The final section of the book completes his framework by guiding students through the activity of creating the various genres they will face. By covering a broad range of genres that students may encounter he more than adequately prepares them for any task ahead of them. The text tackles genres from the traditional print media: letters, memos, reports, instructions, documentation and proposals as well as though from the ever growing digital realm: as e-mail, instant messaging and web pages.
Instead of just talking about technological improvements within the workplace this text also incorporates them into use as a learning tool. Every section of the book lists a URL in which the reader can visit to explore additional links to information on the covered topic. Although the URL for this edition of the text is not yet functional a previous version of the web site was reviewed for the purpose of this review. The content mainly links to outside sources which offers a third party authority to topics and assists students in learning valuable resources they can use in the future.

The text also offers an additional resource through another web site, mytechcommlab.com. The site offers 80 model documents 50 interactive documents along with additional tutorials, links, activities, and research and design tools to further enrich the students learning experience. Instructors can elect to use the site act as its own course management system or lessons can also be created to work within an instructor’s current course management system such as WebCT and Blackboard.

Some of the most valuable benefits of this text are the simplest. The at a glance boxes allow students to quickly and easily comprehend more detailed sections of data. Through these simple concise messages students can quickly scan the text at a later date for an effective review of key concepts. The link feature within many pages of the text attempts to transcend the printed document and turn the text into an interactive book through referencing other sections of the text. This feature allows students to easily skip ahead to a concept that they may be interested in further.

The appendix is an additional tool that Johnson-Sheehan has added to this text which could stand as its own text as practical guide to writing. The common sense samples and descriptions for common grammar mistakes can serve students in improving their current writing style and as reference material in the future.

Very few weaknesses can be found in this otherwise robust text. It seems to offer anything and everything that the beginning technical communicator might need to successfully transition into the workplace. The text is written from the perspective of someone with elementary or minimal lack of technology which could serve to be condescending to many of the students it intends to assist. The current generation of students entering college is very tech savvy. The new section added to this edition on instant messaging specifically can fulfill this scenario. This generation has used instant messenger for a number of years and is well aware of its capabilities and abbreviations. Johnson-Sheehan begins to offer advice on IM etiquette but barely scratches the surface on what could be a significant contribution to explaining proper business use for a tool that has advanced beyond its initial purpose of social interaction.

Overall, the text is a valuable tool that any student at an introductory level should be exposed to. Johnson-Sheehan’s goal, as stated in the preface, is to “share the excitement of technology and technical communication with people who want to work in technical fields”. I believe the clean and clear writing style, up-to-date technical additions coupled with the valuable resources of the at a glance boxes, appendix and case studies allows him to achieve this goal. This book is one that students will maintain as a valuable reference tool as they move throughout their careers and beyond the classroom.