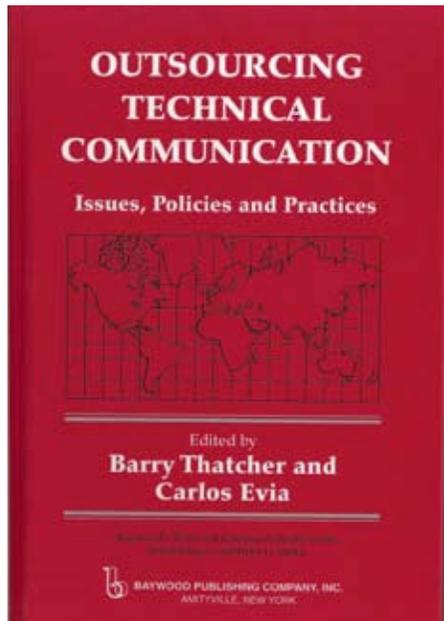


edited by Susan M Shirley



OUTSOURCING TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION: ISSUES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES. EDITED BY BARRY THATCHER AND CARLOS EVIA. BAYWOOD TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS SERIES. CHARLES H SIDES, SERIES EDITOR. AMITYVILLE, NY: BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC; 2007. 244 PAGES. CLOTH \$52.95. ISBN: 978-0-895-03334-5.

This unique book is a valuable tool for technical-communication professors, students, and workers who want to teach, practice, conduct research, or succeed in this field. The authors explore the evolving problems in curriculum development, project management, privacy of intellectual property, and intercultural communication observed with outsourcing.

The book analyzes the outsourcing of technical communication, portraying it as a natural part of the movement of information-technology functions to India, Africa, and the rest of the world. The book is important because there appears to be much uncertainty surrounding the future role of offshore outsourcing of technical communication. Outsourced labor is associated with both cost benefits and potential quality deficits. Concerns abound regarding loss of technical-communication jobs in the United States and the effect of outsourcing on local salaries. Many workers worry that they lack the specialized skills to avoid having their jobs outsourced or the ability to move their careers in new directions. The book addresses those concerns, offering strategies and potential solutions.

The editors sought to find answers to the following questions: What kinds of jobs will remain in the United States? Which jobs are more efficiently handled outside the United States? How can US technical communicators develop a “comparative advantage” in the global economy? How can collaboration and joint development of information products be managed? What are the ethical, cultural, social, and economic dilemmas created by outsourcing? The book answers those questions and offers suggestions to US and non-US companies that outsource on how to adapt to the transition and prepare for the future.

The authors discuss the effect of outsourcing of writing and editing on the quality of communication inasmuch as writing is a cultural activity and writing in a second language or a professional language could lead to miscommunication. One chapter provides the results of a survey of technical-communication workers in

India. It alleviates concerns about Indian workers’ preparedness for their responsibilities by describing India’s history in English and technical writing. The authors go on to explain that India’s approximately 5000 English-speaking writers know the users’ culture and thus make the outsourced writing more culturally appropriate. They discuss the continued need for skill development, which is usually provided by the outsourcing company in the form of workshops and training seminars.

The growth of high-speed, inexpensive, international Internet access has given rise to worldwide outsourcing. US technical communicators responded by improving documentation products, but management preferred the cost savings from outsourcing to overseas workers. A description of what the technical communicator should and should not do next is provided, including reconsidering telecommuting and increasing visibility.

One chapter describes results of a study of an international training program. The author outlines a potential niche for US-based technical communicators as trainers for global projects and organizations. Another chapter focuses on information privacy. When outsourcers such as India are, in turn, outsourcing to China and Sri Lanka, how can confidentiality of outsourced personal or copyright-protected information be maintained? The author discusses offshore privacy concerns and provides strategies for addressing them. Other chapters review the legal issues of outsourcing and implications of US policy and politics for the global market.

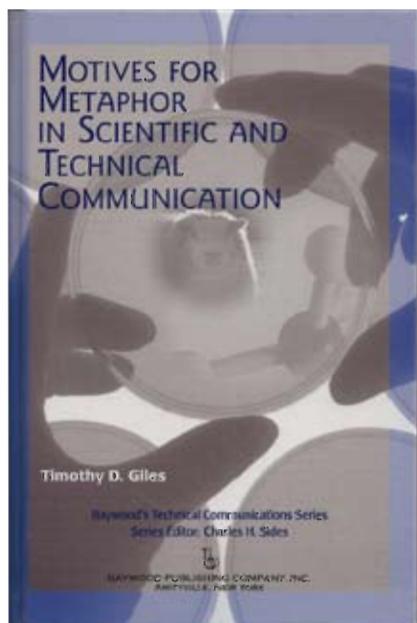
In the conclusion, Thatcher is encouraging about the future of technical communication in the United States. He asks technical communicators to embrace the challenges associated with outsourcing and to make the necessary changes to adapt by developing “innovative and ethical approaches to this interdependent and specialized global content”.

Web-based programs and seminars that review some of the issues addressed in this text are available. However, the book provides information that is broader in

context, well-referenced, and written by innovators in technical communication. This text is sure to become required reading in technical-communication courses that address what outsourcing is, what the implications of outsourcing are, and how a writer is to succeed in this environment.

Beatriz Manzor Mitrzyk

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MOTIVES FOR METAPHOR IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION. TIMOTHY D. GILES. AMITYVILLE, NY: BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC; 2008. 178 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$44.95. ISBN: 978-0-895-03337-2.

To understand the importance of metaphor in shaping scientific and technical theories, pick up a copy of *Motives for Metaphor in Scientific and Technical Communication* by Timothy D. Giles, who teaches technical communication in Georgia Southern University's Department of Writing and Linguistics. Giles not only makes a strong case for the appropriate use of metaphors and analogies in scientific and technical discourse but delves into the linguistic, epistemologic, rhetorical, and historical aspects of metaphor development.

Giles introduces the metaphor to his readers not as the simple figure of speech that most are acquainted with but as a powerful communication tool that has aided our understanding of some important scientific concepts. He notes how scientists and science communicators today shy away from using metaphors to communicate ideas to their audiences, because they believe that they might interfere with conciseness, objectivity, and topical organization.

Giles guides readers to understanding metaphors by providing examples that have shaped scientific theories. He briefly explains the metaphors that have developed the wave and particle theory of light and devotes an entire chapter to explaining the development of the solar system analogy, which explains the structure of an atom. The chapter provides a clear understanding of how a metaphor is constructed and how it in turn develops scientific theories. Giles points out how the solar system analogy was discarded in favor of a mathematical model, but he argues that all language is metaphoric, and so is mathematics, which is an artificial language.

One striking feature of the book is the fact that although Giles presents the opposing views of scholars who have argued for and against the use of metaphors in science, he puts forth a convincing argument in favor of metaphors. He draws from the observations of various scholars and references their work extensively. Views of other experts are provided to give a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

Giles draws on the works of great thinkers, including Aristotle and Nietzsche, to present his case for effective metaphor use. He introduces readers to Francis Bacon's positivist views, which led to the disuse of metaphor in the 17th century. Giles explains how the Baconian views continued to influence scientists and other thinkers even in the 20th century. He draws readers' attention to cloning, an issue that he argues has been at the center of controversy because it has not been explained with a central metaphor that policy-makers and the general public can understand.

In *Motives*, Giles offers his insight on various works, including textbooks, by other writers; these deal with the linguistic aspects of scientific communication. He points out that although many technical-communication textbooks recommend the use of metaphors, the books provide little direction for students on how to recognize metaphors or how to apply them. And some books recommend avoiding metaphors altogether.

Motives can aid those learning to use metaphors effectively in science communication, especially when communicating to a lay audience. Giles has reinforced crucial points in every chapter and thus made the learning process easy. Each chapter ends

with a conclusion that summarizes the main points presented.

The book will be helpful for teachers of science and technical communication, but it will not be easy for novices to follow. Giles assumes that his audience will have some understanding of linguistics and rhetoric. Basic knowledge about the works of Aristotle, Nietzsche, Newton, Descartes, and Bacon will also help readers. But such concepts as atomic structure and the science behind cloning are explained lucidly, and even readers without a physics or life-science background will be able to grasp the ideas easily. Giles has also provided detailed accounts of how scientists worked to present their scientific theories on these topics.

Giles gives readers a clear idea of what metaphor is, why it is such a crucial tool in scientific and technical communication, and how it improves the understanding of scientific theories and evolves as the theories change. Understanding how to use metaphor correctly means wielding an effective communication tool, and *Motives* can help science communicators and scientists in this process.

Misha Kidambi

MISHA KIDAMBI, a graduate student in science and technology journalism at Texas A&M University, wrote this review while she was a Science Editor intern.

Book Note

CHARLATAN: AMERICA'S MOST DANGEROUS HUCKSTER, THE MAN WHO PURSUED HIM, AND THE AGE OF FLIMFLAM. POPE BROCK. NEW YORK: CROWN PUBLISHERS; 2008. 342 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0-307-33988-1.

John R Brinkley became famous for implanting goat testicles in humans in an attempt to restore his patients' vitality and sexual function. His most enduring legacy, however, may stem from his broadcasting. For decades, he was targeted by *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* Editor Morris Fishbein, who exposed the worst cases of medical quackery in the early 20th century. Brock's *Charlatan* is a lively, entertaining portrayal of the "doctor's" life and Fishbein's pursuit of him.

Brinkley's spotty medical training didn't keep patients from flocking to his Kansas clinic for implants. Brinkley built a radio station to promote his services. Loss of his medical and federal broadcasting licenses slowed him only temporarily. He moved to Texas, where he set up a clinic and established a powerful radio station across the border in Mexico, out of reach of US regulators but within range of US listen-

ers. Between "medical" programs, Brinkley broadcast music and other entertainment. Brinkley's programming opened US ears to country music with regular acts, such as the Carter family.

Fishbein's influence was more restrained. He promoted his message about the quackery practiced by Brinkley and his ilk in *JAMA* and similar publications with their much smaller audiences. A series titled *Modern Medical Charlatans* led to the men's final confrontation.

Brock uses just the right touch in describing the medical procedures, mercifully sparing the reader details of what must have been ghastly side effects. His language lapses into the occasional groaner (the goat-testicle procedure is referred to, in one spot, as "a full laying on of glands"), but it reflects the hyperbole of the age of quackery.

Edith Paal

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