1. Choose a single typeface that matches your message and organize the page hierarchically according to typeface weights and point size.

2. Establish your maximum line length for the point size of your typeface.

3. Set one to two points more for your line spacing than the typeface point size.

Practice these rules and your typesetting skills will improve.

Some graphics art directors feel that Times Roman is a boring typeface. When asked why, the answer is Times Roman has been used for years and it's "old hat." However, Times Roman does everything right, and when everything is right, typographically, you are unaware of the typeface and your writing is a pleasure to read. Remember, your good writing can be destroyed by a bad typesetter.

If you would like to pursue the subject of typography, an excellent reference for either the Macintosh or IBM user is James Felici, *The Desktop Style Guide,* New York: Bantam Books, 1991 $11.95

If type jargon mystifies you, then write or call for a **free** copy of *Type Terminology on the Desktop*–Altsys Corporation, 269 W. Renner Road, Richardson, TX 75080–214-680-2060.

Recently accepted in the U.W. Certificate Program in Technical Writing and Editing, David Martin has spent 10 years in the typographic industry. He currently works at Shoreline Community College as a faculty member of the English department. He plans to write more articles providing tips for typesetting and layout in future issues. ▪

Some Collaborative Thoughts on Collaborative Writing

By David Farkas

At the recent IPCC Conference, in Santa Fe, the keynote talk was given by a well-known author in our field, Jonathan Price. His topic was collaborative writing, and he spoke of his experiences co-authoring books and undertaking other collaborative projects over a period of many years. Price spoke eloquently about the pleasure and effectiveness of collaborating with people whom you respect and like. He focused on close interaction, collaboration that is akin to writing with one computer and two keyboards.

I listened and took notes, but—like many other people who listen to presentations—I also allowed my mind to run freely. As Price's observations and anecdotes ran through my head, I thought about my own collaborative experiences, the insights I've gained from many years of conversations with technical writers about collaborative writing and some reading (and a little scholarship) I've done on the topic. I realized that if I had been giving this talk, the emphasis would have been very different. Soon I was recording both Price's ideas and my own reactions to them. Probably, I annoyed my neighbors as I scribbled intensely and tore off successive sheets of paper.

As Price was concluding, I was also concluding, first, that his talk had really covered only one form of collaborative writing and, second, that there seemed to be three fundamental models: (1) close interaction, (2) empowering a single individual, and (3) decomposing the job into relatively discrete components.

The Close Interaction model, as Price made clear, can generate extraordinary creativity, energy, and camaraderie. It also wastes a lot of time as the team members discuss each individual issue, and it can easily devolve into

argument and animosity. It is for the world's true team players or for situations, such as drafting contracts, where everyone has to agree on every word of the final document. Price himself appears to be a natural-born close interaction collaborator. In an earlier period of his life he was an artist and one of the few, I'm sure, who produced art collaboratively.

Frederick Brooks' *The Mythical Man Month* is a classic work on software engineering and, by extension, any form of collaboration. One approach to software development advocated by Brooks, The Surgical Team or Chief Programmer approach, works by empowering a single individual. Collaboration, Brooks notes, easily results in a loss of conceptual integrity. That is, the final product is not a unified whole. This cannot happen when there is a chief programmer because this person is both the overall architect of the project and the one who programs all the important code.

To enable this individual to get the work done in a reasonable amount of time, the other team members take on supporting roles, just as nurses, technicians, and an anesthesiologist might support a single surgeon. In our field, this approach might translate into providing the chief writer with subject matter experts or researchers, an editor, and someone highly skilled in desktop publishing.

One major problem here, of course, is that when team members do nothing more than provide support for a single chief, their ideas and talents are not fully reflected in the finished product. Recognizing this problem, Brooks stipulates one very special team member, someone whose primary function is simply to broaden the chief programmer's perspective by serving as a thinker, discussant, and evaluator.

A variant form of the Empowered Individual model is for one person to draft for a group of idea originators, much as Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence on behalf of the Second Continental Congress. This is a very prevalent and workable arrangement, although—like the chief programmer approach—it is only a borderline instance of collaborative writing. For, while the ideas come from the group, only one person is doing the actual drafting.

The third model, the one that best fits my temperament, is to decompose the document into relatively discrete components. In a sense, then, each person is creating a mini-document, and the mini-documents are ultimately assembled together. The benefit here is that each contributor enjoys considerable autonomy and can work very efficiently. The enormous expenditure of

> *Collaborative writing is complex and subtle and lies at the heart of technical communication.*

time that is required when two (or more) people work in very close interaction is avoided. One danger, of course, is loss of conceptual integrity: the contributors can go off on their own and create components that will not come together at the end. As a corrective, there is need for an intensive initial planning session to generate a common image of what will be produced and periodic meetings to ensure that the common image is being maintained or that any changes in the common image come about through consensus. The hope of the Task Decomposition model is that team members can pool their creativity and talents when they join together and stay out of each other's way between meetings.

Not every writing project, of course, lends itself equally well to decomposition. Currently, I am collaborating with two friends, Scott Boggan and Joe Welinske, on a book on building help systems for software running in Microsoft Windows. My part of the book is the design of help systems; Scott and Joe are working on the implementation of the design using Microsoft's Software Development Kit and various tools for automating the development process. My part is a relatively discrete chunk. The implementation part, however, does not decompose as cleanly into two halves, and Joe and Scott must coordinate very closely.

Summing it all up, the Close Interaction model, akin to one screen and two keyboards, is collaboration in its fullest form. The writers enjoy all the pleasures and suffer all the pains of collaborative work. The two forms of the Empowered Individual model are attempts to largely limit collaboration. The ideas may come from a group but the actual writing comes from one person. Of course, if this chief writer is given an editor, the editor's contribution may be substantial. The Task Decomposition model tries to combine the benefits of collaboration and the benefits of autonomy. The major risk is loss of conceptual integrity as each writer drifts from the common image. But this model offers the only way to complete really large projects in a limited amount of time.

I approached Jonathan Price after his talk, hoping to get his reaction to the taxonomy of collaborative writing that had taken form on my yellow pad while he spoke. Unfortunately, there was very little time before the next session, and I didn't get beyond saying hello and remarking that I had found his talk enjoyable and stimulating. Very likely Price would have replied that there are indeed different models of collaborative writing and that he had focused on the kind he most enjoys and engages in. Also, his proceedings paper, which is broader in focus than his keynote talk, mentions that he and his writing partners often retreat into separate rooms to work on their own. No doubt a great many collaborative writing projects partake of all three models.

Collaborative writing is complex and subtle and lies at the heart of technical communication. My comments are only a single way of looking at the subject. There is, for example, the relationship between collaborative writing and organizational structures and practices, both within and without the publications department. Other important issues are the interpersonal skills necessary for successful collaborative writing and the computer technologies that can be employed. A more abstract and radical perspective holds that all our writing and speaking is collaborative, because all of us absorb our ideas and language from, and contribute them to, a common linguistic culture. In other words, Shakespeare, as well as innumerable other individuals, collaborates with all of us in all the writing and speaking that we do. Because collaborative writing is such an important topic and because it can be approached in so many ways, perhaps we can have an ongoing dialogue on collaborative writing in future issues of *SoundViews*.

David Farkas works at the University of Washington as an Associate Professor in the Department of Technical Communication. He has written numerous articles, his most recent on Apple's Balloon Help in the Journal of Computer Documentation. *Both David and his wife, Jean, are also known in the community for their generous contributions in time and money to the Puget Sound STC Chapter.* ▣

competition and award schedule, it was the Chapter's Administrative Board that made it possible by proposing and appropriating a $750 grant. It is this grant that will cover the first scholarship award under the new schedule (the January 1993 award). After that, interest from the endowment fund will cover subsequent awards.

Approved Schools

Each year the Scholarship Committee investigates programs at local colleges and decides whether their courses and requirements provide suitable training in technical communication. Students in approved programs are eligible to apply for the Souther and White Scholarship. For 1993, the following technical communication programs have been approved:

□ University of Washington, Technical Communication Program

□ University of Washington, Certificate Program in Technical Writing and Editing

□ University of Washington, Graduate Program in Educational Communication and Technology

□ University of Washington, Graphics Design Program

□ Western Washington University, Industrial Design Program

□ Shoreline Community College, Visual Communication Technology Program

□ The Art Institute of Seattle, Visual Communication Program

The Scholarship Committee has distributed posters and brochures publicizing the scholarship competition at all of the approved schools. Committee members also have visited classes or attended student meetings at most of the approved programs to talk about the scholarship competition and to answer questions about the application process.

How to Apply

Application forms for the Souther and White Scholarship are available from each of the approved programs. Completed application forms, including a statement of goals and achievements, a sample of the applicant's work, a transcript, and two recommendations (at least one from a faculty member), must be postmarked no later than November 30, 1992. To find out the

name of the contact person for any of the approved programs or to request that an application form be sent to you, call Sandy Sidie at 348-2600 (Everett) days or 486-6872 (Woodinville) evenings.

Selection Process

The winner of the Souther and White Scholarship is selected by the Scholarship Committee, from among the completed applications received. The committee uses the following criteria to select the winner:

□ Demonstrated academic achievement

□ Demonstrated skill in writing or illustration

□ Strong academic characteristics such as motivation, dependability, and self-discipline

□ Good personal qualities such as initiative, independence, maturity, self-confidence, and strong interpersonal skills

□ A professional attitude and a commitment to the field of technical communication

To announce the results of the competition as soon as possible, the Scholarship Committee will meet early in December to review applications and choose the winner. Because judging will take place very soon after the deadline for submission, applicants are encouraged to submit their applications several days before the deadline. If there is a possibility that an application will not be received by December 4, the applicant should call Sandy Sidie to let the committee know the application is in the mail. ▣