

Alumni Spotlight: Christine Donovan

After six years as a student at James Madison University, past JMU STC president, Christine Donovan, has returned as a JMU staff member. Christine has a rich history with the WRTC department. As an undergraduate, Christine received her BS in WRTC with a concentration in Technical and Scientific Communication. She then went on to the WRTC Graduate School, where she received an MA, again with a concentration in TSC. She was actively involved in JMU STC throughout her years at JMU, serving in three separate officer positions: public relations officer, vice president, and president.



As JMU STC President, Christine “enjoyed working with the leadership team to provide informative and beneficial presentations for the students.” She also “loved meeting the students and spreading the word about STC.” Due to her longstanding involvement in JMU STC, she has “witnessed the student chapter grow over the years,” and says she feels “honored to have had the opportunity to be a part of the development of our chapter.”

Now, she works at the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) as an Information Technology Specialist. According to Christine, she helps faculty “find ways of integrating technology in their classrooms.”

“A large part of my job involves working alongside faculty to create, support and maintain their WordPress websites,” says Christine. “At times I have to create documentation to guide faculty and their students through the WordPress interface, so it’s mainly user documentation that I write.”

As an Information Technology Specialist, she employs a technical writing style that she describes as detailed and descriptive. While she says it’s important to keep things simple, “sometimes you have to elaborate as well. I try to provide a lot of visuals for my documentation so users are able to locate the tasks. I try to keep my users in mind at all times.”

While writing is an important part of her job, she says that the most rewarding aspect is being able to help the JMU community acquire the digital literacy skills that are important in today’s workforce. Though she did admit, “The first thing that came to mind is working with Seán [McCarthy], and being able to keep up with his unique ideas and innovative projects.”

As far as her feelings toward staying at JMU, Christine has a positive outlook mixed with a hint of nostalgia.

“I definitely love JMU and being able to stay here. The community is so friendly and welcoming. Some days I wish I was still a student. It’s weird being an employee; it still hasn’t hit me yet.”

While it may be bittersweet making the transition from student to staff, there is no denying the value Christine brought, and continues to bring, to the JMU community. With a calm demeanor and a strong commitment to students, she has helped so many individuals develop, learn, and grow in their studies. So remember, next time there is a WordPress site created for your class, be sure to thank Christine!

by Kelly Roden

EMD@SH

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Photo courtesy of contextflorida.com

Beyond the Classroom: Medical Communication

In my experience, the best classes are the ones that you find yourself thinking about outside of the classroom, the ones you bring up in everyday conversation—the class you can relate to that *People* article you read or the top story on the 6 o’clock news.

WRTC 458, Scientific and Medical Communication, is certainly one of those classes. The focus of WRTC 458 this semester is on representations of the

reproductive body in modern culture. Some themes of the course include the medicalization and commodification of pregnancy, pregnancy as a condition necessitating intervention by health professionals, and the role of technology in how women and fetuses have been represented.

What I have enjoyed the most about this course is how it combines so many different aspects of the WRTC program. Future rhetorical theorists

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For more information:

EMD@SH™ Editor,
Mackenzie Kelley
kelleymk@dukes.jmu.edu

Chapter President,
Kelly Roden
rodenka@dukes.jmu.edu

<http://orgs.jmu.edu/stc/>
<http://jmustc.wordpress.com/>

Mailing address:

Harrison Hall, Suite 2276
JMU, MSC 2103
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
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EMD@SH™
Production Staff

Project Manager
Mackenzie Kelley

Editor
Alexandra Maben

Contributors
Kelly Roden
Sydney Long
Lindsey Campbell
Alison Whittington

Beyond the Classroom...

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will enjoy the analysis of a variety of texts such as anatomical drawings of a fetus in the womb, 18th century midwifery texts, and contemporary works like *Pregnancy for Dummies*. For the more technically and scientifically minded, the course explores the technocratic model of medicine, which emphasizes the importance of technology as a source of authority in modern medicine. It also examines the language used in hospitals and clinics to describe reproductive processes and issues and explores the resulting cultural paradigms surrounding these topics.

While this course may seem too gender or topic specific to be of interest to many students, I have found it to be a course that challenges many beliefs I never realized could be challenged, and I can honestly say it's impacted the way I envision my future. If that is not the mark of a course worth taking, I don't know what is.

by Lindsey Campbell

A Message from the President

I am so happy to have served as James Madison University's STC president for the 2014-2015 academic year! Looking back on our semester, I would like to thank Dr. Crow, Dr. Pass, Ms. Byers, and Dr. Jacovitch for facilitating meetings, and I would like to thank, as well, our internship provider representatives: George Lilly from WVPT, Lauren Huber from Downtown Renaissance, Teresa Wease from Harrisonburg Turks, Lynn Eaton from Carrier Library, and Lindsay Aldrich from CISR.



Kelly Roden
JMU STC President

For our final *EmD@sh* of the year, the theme is industry-specific writing. This *EmD@sh* features articles about writing in a range of industries, from magazine writing to medical writing. We also have a Spotlight Alum on our past JMU STC President, Christine Donovan!

In regard to meetings, as the semester comes to a close we only have our Wrap-Up meeting on April 15 left. This meeting is especially important. Not only will there be free pizza, soda, and games but also we will be holding officer elections for the 2015-2016 year. If you are invested in the future of our JMU STC Chapter, please come vote at our final meeting! Finally, I hope everyone has learned something new this year and will use what they have learned in their future academic endeavors and careers.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me at rodenka@dukes.jmu.edu. You can also contact the Publications Committee Officer Mackenzie Kelley at kelleymk@dukes.jmu.edu. Have a fantastic summer!

What's in a Zine?

"Zine" is a term that's short for magazine, which consists of a self-published piece of work that can take form in many different mediums, including, but not limited to, books, magazines, and websites. Usually created as collaborations between people with a common interest, zines can consist of artwork, photography, poems, essays, and anything else under the creative umbrella.

Starting a zine is not as complicated as it may seem. Once the creators have a theme, there is no limit to what can be designed. Zines are a forum of expression that can reach topics as complex as gender identity or as simple as a tribute to dogs. If there is something a creator wishes to express, a zine could be a good way to communicate it to others. A zine also creates an opportunity to work with others who have similar ideas or opinions.

Writing for a zine is another available option rather than starting one. Heading a zine can seem intimidating. However, there are endless opportunities to join a zine-in-progress. Checking around campus or online is always a good place to start if interested in contributing to someone's zine. If already well-versed in the zine world, checking out Zinefest in Washington, D.C., is a great opportunity for establishing networks or sharing passions for zines.

If still confused on where to start, try beginning with a pencil and paper and writing about anything that comes to mind. Whether a poet, a journalist, an essayist, or even just someone with an opinion, zines can be a great way to gain experience in writing and creativity, as well as a way to get more involved in a community of passionate, like-minded citizens.

by Alison Whittington

10 Skills Every Technical Communicator Needs

- 1. Time management:** Often, a technical communicator may be working on more than one project at a time, all while under a deadline. The ability to manage time wisely can keep feelings of unproductivity or of being overwhelmed to a minimum.
- 2. Comprehensible writing:** Writing skills are necessary everywhere in this field, but being able to communicate in a way others can understand can go a long way.
- 3. Translation of ideas:** It all begins with an idea, but turning that idea into a document that allows others to envision the same idea is a talent that can get the project going much more quickly.
- 4. Design:** The way a document looks is as important as what the document says. It's that first impression that draws people into the content.
- 5. Collaboration:** The majority of documents touch more than one set of hands before publication, and it is important for technical communicators to know how to work with others in a cordial, efficient manner.
- 6. Interviewing and listening:** The best way to learn something is to ask questions, and knowing whom to ask is the first step. The next step is listening to that person's expertise and correctly taking notes.
- 7. Tech savvy-ness:** It's important to have a good understanding of computers and the standard programs on them. In a profession where documents are always produced, knowing the way around a computer can aid productivity.
- 8. Usability testing:** Making sure a product works is an essential step in the process of getting the product out there. Technical communicators are often the ones who make sure the products work the way their documentation explains they are supposed to work.
- 9. Attention to detail:** Editing documents is a factor of the job that cannot be overlooked. Missed errors in published documentation can diminish the reputation of the communicator and can lead to a document that appears less than professional.
- 10. Patience:** Sometimes things get tough, problems are difficult to solve, or people are hard to work with. It is all about taking a breath and being persistent in resolving those issues.