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Ethics & Technical Writing

Recitation 9
EG-UY 1004

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICS & TECHNICAL WRITING

Why does this matter?

- The language you use to describe, instruct, and explain your work as an engineer has an impact
- **Active listening/reading:** working with and consulting affected groups
 - a. Do they actually benefit from your product/idea? What do they need?
- **Equity:** the situation in which all people or groups are given access to the correct number and types of resources for them so as to achieve equal results



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EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT

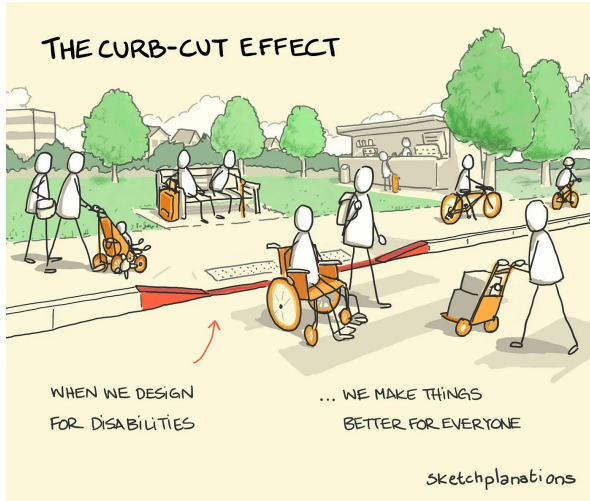


Figure 1: Image courtesy of SketchPlantations

The “Curb-Cut” Effect

- Design & writing with empathy for the final user in mind can have unintended yet positive results

Forward-Thinking

- Technical writing with ethics in mind helps to pave the way for future users, customers, and colleagues.



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ACTION & LANGUAGE

1. Action

- a. How should a user interact with this product?

2. Inclusivity

- a. Is this an explanation that a wide variety of users can understand?

3. Accessibility & Lived Experience

- a. How can we reach and communicate effectively with our users?



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WHERE DO WE SEE THIS IN ENGINEERING?

Instructional Text

- Product descriptions, instructions, tutorials

UX/User Interface

- Product design, emphasis on accessibility

Technical Terms

- Inclusive language versus outdated language

Everyday Communication

- Business proposals, marketing materials, branding, social media



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THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL WRITING IN ETHICS

1. Reframing engineering projects in relation to people.

- a. Ex: a water filtration system doesn't exist in a vacuum—there are people whose lives are affected by the system's efficacy.

2. Consider all stakeholders.

- a. Ex: a water filtration system doesn't just affect the city government—it affects specific neighborhoods/towns/regions. What is the demographic makeup of this area? How might this design help achieve better equity?



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APPLYING THIS TO LAB REPORTS

Moving forward, consider your audience and their possible:

1. Technical knowledge/skill
2. Wide range of abilities
3. Lack of background/context
4. Detailed yet concise introductory information & instructions
5. Need for a helpful, detailed visual aid (ex: graphs, tables, diagrams, photos, etc.)



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Questions?



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