NYU | TANDON SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

GENERAL ENGINEERING

TECHNICAL WRITING & ETHICS

Recitation 11
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

- How are you working with those impacted by your work? Is this problem one they face? Do they actually benefit from the solution you propose?
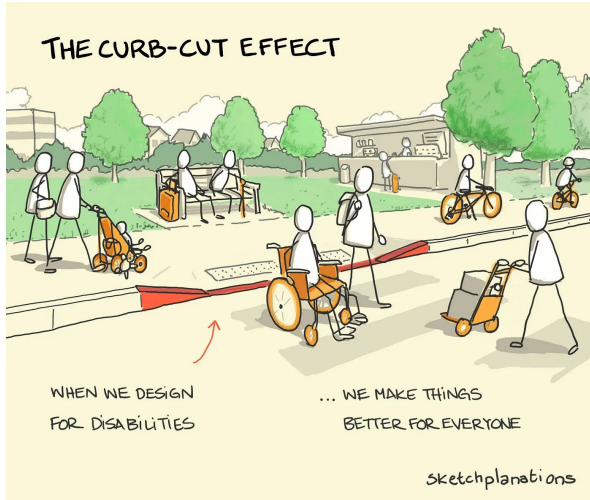
EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT

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

ACTION & LANGUAGE

1. **Action**

   How should a user interact with this product?

2. **Inclusivity**

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

3. **Accessibility & Lived Experience**

   How can we reach and communicate effectively with our users?

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Inclusive language versus outdated language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

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?

APPLYING THIS TO YOUR WORK

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.)

Questions?