

Call for Papers

Posthuman Praxis in Technical Communication

Things matter. And so do objects. In the past few decades, scholars across disciplines have developed theoretical frameworks like posthumanism (Hayles, 1999; Haraway, 1991), object-oriented rhetoric/ontology (Boyle & Barnett, 2014; Bryant, 2011), new materialisms (Coole & Frost, 2010; Bennett, 2010), and Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 1999; Latour, 2007) to articulate and acknowledge the agency and importance of materiality and nonhuman actants. But relatively little work, with some important exceptions like Spinuzzi (2003), Knievel (2006), Graham (2009), and Potts (2014), has explored the implications of these theories for technical communication practice, research, and teaching. In their TCO special issue on posthumanism, Mara and Hawk (2009) claim that envisioning technical communication as a posthuman practice opens up more possibilities for rhetorical action. We agree. As such, this collection follows Mara and Hawk in their broad definition of posthumanism as “a general category for the theories and methodologies that situate acts and texts in the complex interplays” among humans and nonhumans and that highlight the role of materiality in these interplays (3). But how exactly does attention to nonhuman, material agents shape, reconfigure, improve, and/or challenge our practice of technical communication?

This collection calls for studies that focus on technical communication practice informed by posthuman theories, broadly conceived. Because practice can dissolve the boundaries of terminology, we are less concerned with “camps” or theoretical allegiances and turn instead to research that demonstrates the implications of these theories for practice. Posthuman rhetorics are valuable for the field of technical communication not only as new ways of thinking but better ways of doing. It is with this practitioner ethic that we seek studies, researches, and projects revealing how attention to posthuman theories and methodologies have actually improved technical communication practice and have indeed opened up more rhetorical possibilities for those researching, teaching, and practicing technical communication. In other words, this collection is a call for studies of posthuman praxis.

The editors welcome 500 word proposals that address, challenge, or respond to one or more of these questions:

- How has the shift towards posthuman theories shaped, changed, improved, or confounded the practice of technical communication? How do technical communicators practice differently given the recent attention to nonhuman actants and materiality?
- What research methods or methodological approaches most effectively integrate or incorporate posthuman theories? What kinds of studies specifically can illustrate the results of such methods and methodologies?
- What sites of technical communication practice require or benefit from attention to material systems or nonhuman agents? How might these benefits be articulated?
- How might current or common technical communication teaching practices be challenged by explicit attention to posthuman theories? How might collaborations, texts, and deliverables be re-examined in light of what these theories have to offer students?

In short, we are looking for ways in which attention to posthuman theories practically help technical communicators grapple with emergent agency in practice-based settings. This collection seeks contributors with a wide range of theoretical, pedagogical, disciplinary, methodological, and epistemological approaches. As such, proposed projects could:

- Offer original research, accounts, or studies of nonhuman actants in traditional sites of technical communication, like organizations, the public sphere, workplaces, or classrooms, or in interdisciplinary areas like health/medical communication, gaming and multimedia studies, environmental studies, or risk communication;
- Revisit, re-write or re-analyze an existing research project or data set in light of its non-human actants or new theoretical frames;
- Develop a theory of posthuman praxis that is grounded in practice or research.

The deadline for submissions is September 15, 2014. Decisions about proposals will be made by November 1, 2014. Final chapters will be expected by June 30, 2015. Please attach submissions as a Word file and email to Kristen R. Moore (k.moore@ttu.edu). Questions about the collection as a whole can be directed to either Daniel Richards (dprichar@odu.edu) or Kristen R. Moore (k.moore@ttu.edu).

Daniel Richards, Old Dominion University
Kristen R. Moore, Texas Tech University