



The switch

My name is Nate Kaufman and I am a graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. My course of study was English with emphasis in writing, linguistics, and technical communication. At some point I plan on going back and working on my Masters degree, probably in same or similar field. Oddly enough, English was not my first choice. I was originally a Chemistry Major; however, I found Chemistry to be quite boring and I always had a knack for writing. So despite the seemingly difficult switch, the transition from one to the other went smoothly. I enjoy writing and technology much more than balancing a chemical equation or deriving the 'k' value from an acid-base reaction. It is in this medium I can express my ideas wholly and eloquently and create meaning on a page or computer screen.

What I've learned so far

I began taking English classes and enjoyed them all, especially British Literature classes, since it was from British Literature that many of our classics came into existence. While I enjoyed these classes I came to realize, through my own findings and through the help of Dr. Tracy Bridgeford, that I could not analyze Shakespeare the rest of my life and make a decent living. I would categorize myself as a good writer, but the few select jobs that go to analytical Shakespearian critics are reserved for certain affluent literary circles. That is when I decided to enroll in the Technical Communication program at UNO, taught by Dr. Bridgeford. These classes, five of them in all, meshed my love of writing with my love of computers and technology into one unified discourse. This new knowledge also opened up a number of opportunities for me, hopefully not limited too but including job opportunities. That idea is, "in a nutshell", where much of my work comes from: how we can become more rounded and desirable if we integrate writing and language with technology. Since then, I have learned so many things, many of which I would not know had I not enrolled in the Tech Comm. program. I have learned web design and have become skilled with Adobe GoLive and the entire Adobe suite, including Photoshop and InDesign. I have learned the principles of design and the different levels of editing

involved in drafting a document. I can now design many types of office documents, including query letters, and know how to design everything from brochures and flyers to bookmarks and reports. I have honed my writing and editing skills even more so; become accustomed to several writing styles including MLA and APA, learned the theory and rhetoric behind technical communication, and familiarized myself with Communities of Practice in particular how to work and negotiate meaning within one. These skills are essential to someone looking to be a well-rounded, career-oriented individual.

Communities of practice

I would define a Community of Practice or COP as a group of individuals with common goals and skills and an equal level of intensity, unified together for a particular task or situation, whatever that might be. In a COP I learned how to communicate more efficiently in a workplace setting and combine the group's ideas into a finished product we could all appreciate. I was a member of a COP in all five classes and each time had the responsibility of working with others on collaborative projects. In the final class, the Senior Capstone in Technical Communication, I read a book by James Paul Gee, Glynda Hull, and Colin Lankshear titled, "The New Work Order." This book was particularly interesting from a COP standpoint because it gave true-to-life examples of COP practices in workplace environments and explained more clearly the socio-cultural impact COPs have on these environments. Some examples were more encouraging than others were, but it gave me a sense of what to expect. Another well known resource on COPs is Etienne Wenger's, "Communities of Practice: a brief introduction." This article gives a more concrete definition of a COP and the history and integration of the idea. I found this article to be invaluable as I immersed myself within a COP environment.

Continued growth

As mentioned before, I plan to continue my studies, though in exactly what field I do not know. It will be a pursuit based on my interests in tech comm. and rhetoric, computer programming, or literature of some focus. I have come a long way from the green-thumb I once was in tech comm. and I will continue to grow and develop my skills for as long as I am able. This site is my professional/career oriented-self, "In a Nutshell."