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Technical communication — Vocabulary

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Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC~~ ~~37, *Language and terminology*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at ~~www.iso.org/members.html.~~www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Suppliers of goods and services provide information for the use of their products, such as instructions, manuals, service information, information for assembly or troubleshooting information. Technical communication is the process of defining, creating and delivering these information products for the safe, effective and efficient use of supported products.

A standardized common terminology as provided in this document helps to prevent misunderstandings and disputes between acquirers and suppliers of information products as well as between manufacturers and customers. A standardized terminology for technical communication will support both acquirers and suppliers of information products. Organizations that provide information products can formulate more precise requirements, and providers can deliver information products according to specifications.

A standardized common terminology also helps to foster mutual understanding, both within the technical communication community and in contact with other relevant communities such as the language services industry. Furthermore, this document can be used as a basis for researching and teaching technical communication in various settings.

~~Annex A~~Annex A contains two concept models that illustrate the interrelations between some key concepts in technical communication.

Technical communication — Vocabulary

1 Scope

This document defines terms for the theory and application of technical communication. It prepares the terminological background for all other standards in the field of technical communication by providing precise definitions and standardized terms for basic concepts in this domain.

This document is applicable to persons creating information products in the field of technical communication or using these information products professionally.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obphttps://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1 CoreTerms relating to core concepts

3.1.1
technical communication
DEPRECATED: technical writing
process of defining and creating *information for use* (3.1.2)(3.1.2) to be delivered as *information products* (3.1.4)(3.1.4) for the safe, effective and efficient use of a *supported product* (3.1.5)(3.1.5) throughout its life cycle

Note 1 to entry: Technical communication includes all modes, such as *text* (3.7.1.2),(3.7.1.2), image, *audio* (3.7.1.3)(3.7.1.3) and all media, e.g. printed manuals, tutorial videos, *online help* (3.8.1.2).(3.8.1.2).

Note 2 to entry: The term “technical writing” should not be used because it no longer reflects the variety of modes and media in current use.

Note 3 to entry: In some contexts, the term “technical communication” can refer to more general communicative acts concerning products, such as e-mail communication between engineers.

3.1.2
information for use
information identified and collected during the information development process

3.1.3
product
result of an action or process

Note 1 to entry: Products can be physical products, technical systems, software and services.

3.1.4
information product
product ~~(3.1.3)~~(3.1.3) consisting of *information for use* ~~(3.1.2)~~(3.1.2) that is delivered for the safe, effective and efficient use of a *supported product* ~~(3.1.5)~~(3.1.5)

Note 1 to entry: Information products can also be generated during runtime of a content delivery system.

Note 2 to entry: Information products can contain *conceptual information* ~~(3.4.2),~~(3.4.2), *instructional information* ~~(3.4.3)~~(3.4.3) or *reference information* ~~(3.4.4).~~(3.4.4).

Note 3 to entry: Information products come in various forms, such as *manuals* ~~(3.8.1.1)~~(3.8.1.1) or *online help* ~~(3.8.1.2).~~(3.8.1.2).

3.1.5
supported product
~~***product* (3.1.3)~~
product (3.1.3) to which an *information product* ~~(3.1.4)~~(3.1.4) relates

EXAMPLE

— ——industrial products (e.g. machinery, components, devices, equipment);

— ——consumer products (e.g. household appliances, audio-visual devices, communication devices, do-it-yourself products);

— ——medical devices, equipment and systems;

— ——complex systems of systems (e.g. industrial plants, refineries, production sites, data centres);

— ——means of transport (e.g. cars, trucks, ships, airplanes);

— ——application software (e.g. office software, web applications);

— ——software for operation and automatic control of systems;

— ——technical services.

Note 1 to entry: An *information product* ~~(3.1.4)~~(3.1.4) is an essential component of a supported product ~~(3.1.5).~~

3.1.6
content
information in any form

EXAMPLE *Text* ~~(3.7.1.2),~~(3.7.1.2), *audio* ~~(3.7.1.3),~~(3.7.1.3), video.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—[1], 3.1.2]

3.1.7
technical documentation
set of *information products* ~~(3.1.4)~~(3.1.4) provided by the supplier of a *supported product* ~~(3.1.5)~~(3.1.5)

[1] Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/FDIS 20539:2023.

3.1.8
technical communicator
DEPRECATED: technical writer
person who develops *information for use* ~~(3.1.2)~~(3.1.2)

Note 1 to entry: The role of a technical communicator can include researching product information, defining target audience information needs, ensuring that legal and normative requirements are met, authoring *texts* ~~(3.7.1.2),~~(3.7.1.2), creating safety instructions and coordinating *translations* ~~(3.6.3.1).~~(3.6.3.1).

Note 2 to entry: The term "technical writer" should not be used because it no longer reflects the variety of modes and media in current use.

3.1.9
information structure
organization of *information for use* ~~(3.1.2)~~(3.1.2) in order to ~~optimise~~optimize presentation and understanding

3.1.10
structuring method
content organization according to semantic or functional criteria in order to ensure *consistency* ~~(3.6.5.1.6)~~(3.6.5.1.6) and interchangeability of information

3.1.11
style guide
set of specifications designed to ensure *information quality* ~~(3.6.5.1)~~(3.6.5.1) and *information product quality* ~~(3.6.5.2)~~(3.6.5.2)

Note 1 to entry: Style guides should take into account information quality principles such as *completeness* ~~(3.6.5.1.4)~~(3.6.5.1.4) and *consistency* ~~(3.6.5.1.6)~~(3.6.5.1.6) as well as information product quality criteria such as *usability* ~~(3.6.5.2.2)~~(3.6.5.2.2) and *readability* ~~(3.6.5.5.4).~~(3.6.5.2.4).

3.1.12
single source publishing
content management approach which allows the same source *content* ~~(3.1.6)~~(3.1.6) to be delivered across different forms of media and more than once

3.1.13
terminology
set of designations and concepts belonging to one domain or subject

[SOURCE: ISO 1087:2019, 3.1.11]

3.1.14
terminology work
work concerned with the systematic collection, description, processing and presentation of concepts and their designations

[SOURCE: ISO 1087:2019, 3.5.1, modified — ~~Admitted~~admitted term "terminology management" and Notes 1 and 2 ~~deleted~~to entry have been removed.]

3.1.15
translatability
ease of rendering *content* ~~(3.1.6)~~(3.1.6) from one language or culture to another

~~3.2 Users~~

3.2 Terms relating to users

3.2.1
user
person who interacts with a *supported product* ~~(3.1.5)~~(3.1.5)

Note 1 to entry: Users can be part of a specific *target audience* ~~(3.2.2).~~(3.2.2).

Note 2 to entry: "User" can include persons who install, operate, service, maintain or dispose of the product.

[SOURCE: IEC/IEEE 82079-1:2019, 3.47, modified — "a supported product" has been replaced by "the product" in the definition. A new Note 1 to entry has been added. ~~Former~~The former Note 1 to entry has been renumbered as Note 2 to entry.]

3.2.2
target audience
audience
~~audience~~
group of persons for whom an *information product* ~~(3.1.4)~~(3.1.4) is intended

Note 1 to entry: A target audience can consist of specific *users* ~~(3.2.1)~~(3.2.1) or other persons.

[SOURCE: IEC/IEEE 82079-1:2019, 3.42, modified — "the information product" has been replaced by "information for use" and "by the supplier" has been deleted in the definition. ~~Admitted~~The admitted term "audience" and Note 1 to entry have been added.]

3.2.3
skilled person
person with relevant technical education, training and/or experience

[SOURCE: IEC/IEEE 82079-1:2019, 3.36, modified — "person" has been replaced by "individual", "and/or" has been replaced by "or" and "to enable perceiving risks and avoiding hazards occurring during use of a product" has been deleted in the definition.]

3.3 ~~Product~~Terms related to product and information life cycles

3.3.1
put into service~~, verb~~
prepare a system for its *intended use* ~~(3.6.4.1)~~(3.6.4.1)

3.3.2
put out of service~~,~~ verb
change a system from an operational status to a non-operational status

3.3.3
product life cycle
period of time from the first idea to the ultimate *disposal* ~~(3.3.4.10)~~(3.3.4.10) or *recycling* ~~(3.3.4.11)~~(3.3.4.11) of a *product* ~~(3.1.3)~~(3.1.3)

Note 1 to entry: The product life cycle is divided into defined periods called phases in which activities that belong together are grouped, e.g. product concept, design, production. The beginning and end of phases require definite decisions.

