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Review of *Information Overload: An International Challenge for Professional Engineers and Technical Communicators*. Judith B. Strother, Jan M. Ulijn, and Zohra Fazal
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Information Overload: An International Challenge for Professional Engineers and Technical Communicators is the first text to be introduced as part of the *Professional Engineering Communication* book series and is committed to examining, sharing, and advancing global communication practices in technical, scientific, and engineering fields. This book, effectively organized for multiple and interdisciplinary audiences—students, industry professionals, and researchers alike—provides a consistent format for relaying multifaceted content that ties together three main concepts: forms of information overload, technology, and communication. *Information Overload* is organized in two sections: *Section I*: Causes and Costs of Information Overload and *Section II*: Control and Reduction of Information Overload.

Section I: Causes and Costs of Information Overload addresses why information overload exists and ways that communicators can reduce it. This section begins by presenting a historical and "interdisciplinary system" (2012, p. 41) perspective of information overload definitions, causes, and consequences, and subsequent chapters move into a communicator's responsibility for reducing information overload. For example, in Chapter 4, Caborn and Cooper emphasize technical communicators' roles in making sure communication is clear in order to avoid information overload, especially considering the various means by which information is transmitted. Additionally, they point out the need to consider who the audience is and how the audience will use the communication. When communicating interculturally, communicators must also consider the cultural impacts demonstrated via communication styles. Differentiating between high and low context, Ulijn and Strother further explain in Chapter 5 how information overload can be reduced interculturally when communicators understand the relationship between culture and discourse structures. Moreover, Alton and Manning detail the need to use best practices in document design so that information is easily accessible to users. Finally, this section ends with a framework designed to measure the monetary cost of information overload.

Unlike *Section I* which focuses on improved communication to avoid information overload, the next section, *Control and Reduction of Information Overload*, centers on the ways that technology is impacting, enabling, and contributing to information overload. The authors of chapters 8 and 9 identify how the considerable amounts of data available on the Web are contributing to information overload because information can be difficult to find. Combatting this concern involves engineers' careful planning in how they store data and end users' savvy query knowledge. The last three chapters of this book also offer suggestions to reduce overload. In Chapter 10, Mengis and Eppler share the results of an online survey designed to learn more about information visualization conducted with participants from the United State and countries in Europe and the Middle East. From these results, they discuss further, the impact of information visualization on overload. Chapter 11 deals with information overload as an organizational, rather than individual concern, and in Chapter 12, Verhoeff concludes with a discussion about the managerial information paradox by sharing his research findings and sharing learning points by drawing from the other chapters in this text.

A criticism that sometimes dwells among scholars and practitioners is the divergence that takes place when moving from theory to practice; the two can seem completely unrelated and disconnected. However, in this text (and a definite strength of the text) the editors strategically situate theory and practice together in order to demonstrate that the two can and do work conjointly. Following an introduction chapter written by the editors, there are 11 additional chapters written by an international selection of university professors, graduate students, and industry specialists from diverse academic and professional backgrounds. This highlights the first strength of *Information Overload*: Contributors offer distinct perspectives and research-based practical strategies that can be used to overcome challenges one might encounter as a result of information overload.

The second strength is the content-related *Practical Insights* written by representatives from technical corporations around the globe that conclude ten of the eleven chapters. Although each *Practical Insights* contains different content, it is interesting to note the various examples of information overload experienced by these companies, the causes and challenges of information overload, and numerous ways by which they have overcome these challenges. For example, in Chapter 7, "Cost of Information Overload in End-user Documentation," Prasanna Bidkar investigates the ways that noise—the communication disrupter—acts in the role of information overload in user documentation and presents a framework for "calculating the cost of information overload in end-user documentation based on user behavior" (2012, p. 125).

Following Bidkar's article is a *Practical Insights from Harris Corporation* written by Amar Patel, a Program Manager, that details sources and strategies for dealing with the company's information overload. To demonstrate how Bidkar's research-based article functions conjointly with Patel's *Practical Insights*, one can see how Patel' strategy to filter information before reading it cuts down on information overload which can act as noise. Conversely, of the several strategies mentioned by Patel to reduce information overload, he explains that Harris' H-tube "was developed, e.g., to establish a common ground of communication" (2012, p. 142). Here, we see the relation between Bidkar's research and Patel's practice in industry exemplified, and such is the case throughout the text whereby the content of each chapter intersects theory and practice. As readers will learn from this text, there are various definitions, causes, and consequences of information overload, and of course one solution to reducing this overload is to decrease information. This may not always be a viable solution, and an initial response to this solution might be efficient time management. And while, yes, good time management is a useful suggestion, a final strength of *Information Overload* is the proactive approaches suggested by contributors as ways for experiencing and producing less information overload. The amounts of information available to us is only increasing as technology continues to advance, but as communicators, we all have a part to play to ensure the clear transmittal of communication which is a major step toward producing less information overload.