Technical Communication: A History
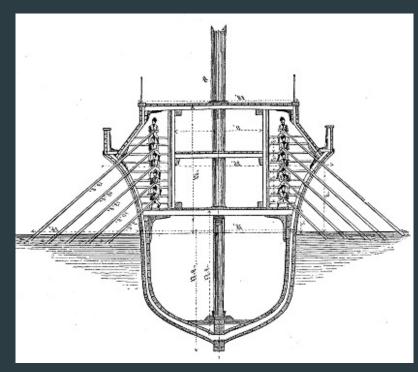
How a Profession was Established

War and Technical Communication
The Rise of the Roman Empire

- Assembly instructions inscribed into planks of boats, quinqueremes

- After capture of 1 boat, Romans produced 100 boats in less than 3 months

- Romans defeated the Carthaginians using their own naval technology (Naylor, n.d.)

Baumeister: Denkmaler des klassischen Altertums, 1888, Volume III, page 1611

War and Technical Communication World War II

- WWII was the first technological war.

- Each new weapon, vehicle, and machine used for war required a manual (Connors, 1982).
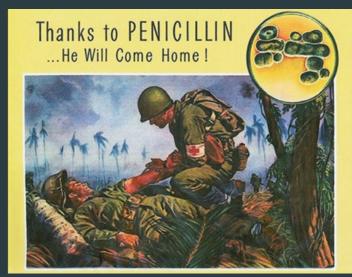
War and Technical Communication World War II

▶ Not only did technical writing grow as a result of WWII; it was also put to great use during the war.

"Under a period of great upheaval and stress, the Allies were able to train ordinary men and women, often in stressful or dangerous circumstances, to use some of the most cutting-edge technology of the time" (Naylor, n.d.).

Peaceful Applications of War Technology

▶ "After the end of the war, technical writing finally became a genuine profession as wartime technologies were translated into peacetime uses" (Connors, 1982).

Life Magazine, August 14, 1944

Kare11.com September 22, 2023

Continued Focus of Technical Communication

▶ The profession has and will continue to be user focused (Redish, 2019).

▶ Technical communicators value communication as the most important aspect of their jobs (Pringles & Williams, 2005).

Technological Advances and Technical Communication

▶ New technology has not made the profession obsolete (Connors, 1982).

▶ Technical communicators need to learn new technologies to evolve along with the profession (O'Hara, 2001).

Transferable Skills of Technical Communication

▶ Analyze rhetorical situations

▶ Learn and use conventions in context

▶ Effectively communicate to diverse audiences

▶ Use communication to solve problems (Kimball, 2017)

Transferable Skills of Technical Communication

"Technical communication is both a thing that can be made and exchanged, and an activity that people the world over engage in everyday" (Kimball, 2017).

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Handout

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How a Profession was Established

Technical History Handout