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JC: What is technical writing?

PK: Obviously technical writing can be a lot of different things. In my particular field-- I work in software, so it has to do with creating resources of different kinds. It could be written documentation. It could be audio/ visual. It could be just working on the software itself to help users get the most out of the tool they're using and get the information they need, at the moment they need it, in the way that they prefer to consume it. Which could mean multiple different types-- But there's obviously a large field of technical writing outside of software, and I think software and technologies is one field we think about a lot. But, your know, every flyer or document that we consume has some sort of writer behind it and whether their job title is technical writing or writer which happens to be mine. But, you know, it varies. There's just a large field of condensing and constructing technical information and translating it to a particular audience for a particular purpose. And that's what's fun about it is that we tend to be the least technical person in a very technical team, and so it has the challenge of understanding the technical side. But at the same time we're representing the person who's going to use our tools and might not be that technical. And so kind of bridging that gap. [That] is the main thing that I do.

JC: What's the added value of studying technical writing in the context of an English Department?

PK: Well it's a whole other field of work for most English majors that-- Me included, most of us don't know that much about. When we're kind of stuck in a traditional English department. So it certainly opens up a whole world of possibilities to work as a writer in a more corporate setting, in a more technical setting for most of us. And it, I think it also is a different way to exercise the writing muscle that has to do with collecting, self-teaching, and understanding technical information and then translating that. And deciding how to output that which can be so many different ways. So I think that for English Departments, English majors, it's a very promising, very marketable field. For non-majors. I still think it's a huge opportunity for-- I've talked to students about this before, but in any field of interest has writers somewhere. So anything anything that interests you, whether it's your major or hobby, has writing jobs. So that's that's one opportunity. So if writing something that you like and are good at, then you can turn that into a job within any field that you're interested in. But also in particularly more scientific and technical departments, I think that unfortunately most students don't get a lot of experience and practice writing and condensing information and outputting things in a clear way and well stated way. And I find that a lot of people are overwhelmed or intimidated by writing, and in most fields you'll have to write even if it's just email. But you'll have to write eloquently and clearly and fast. And so it's such a good exercise in taking vast amounts of

information and narrowing down what it is you want to say and how and why. And then getting it out. So I think everybody should consider [technical writing], especially anybody in the hard sciences, anybody in technology majors-- Anybody that doesn't normally get to have a writing class in college other than, you know, an introductory class.