

# Progress reports

# Progress reports = a hybrid

- As reports,
  - Act as a stand-alone document that carries facts to other interested people.
  - Can be informal/short or formal/longer.
  - Monitor progress and accountability.
  - Maintain contact with funding agencies, industry partners, and/or other colleagues on the team and within the organization.

- As technical documentation, progress reports
  - Provide precise description of technical work so that other professionals may coordinate work and/or apply, repair, enhance, modify, or add to the project.

- Progress reports are part of R & D cycle as well as actual implementation and operation and thus part of \$\$\$ funding \$\$\$.
  - Part of the scheduled deliverables.
  - Negotiated as part of the proposal process.
    - Method of delivery is specified, too.
  - Are carefully scrutinized for accountability and management as well as technical precision and, of course, progress. Or lack of progress.

# Our tasks as writers. . .

- Be in control of our data.
  - Complete, accurate data
  - Thorough project documentation notes
- Understand our audience.
- Know how to organize data so that it can be efficiently and effectively used by our audience.

# What we need to remember about audience. . .

- Fact: Our audience can and will exist at various levels.
  - Experts
  - Technicians
  - Managers/decision makers
  - Laypersons
  - Or a mixed group.
- Fact: Someone who is an expert in one field may not be “expert” in a closely related field.
- Fact: In the workplace, technicians, managers, and laypeople have a lot of influence.

# Audience continued. . .

- Fact: Readers/listeners
  - Are working to create meaning bit by bit.
  - Are influenced by their situations, attitudes, etc and thus can be distracted.
  - Have a finite amount of resources for comprehension.
  - Absorb information visually as well as textually.
- Therefore, our understanding of that audience is what determines
  - Sequence
  - Rate
  - Density

# What we need to recall about information organization

- Data → Information → Knowledge → Wisdom
- Information that is organized takes into accounts
  - Sequence: where the audience needs to begin
  - Density: the amount, type, detail, and complexity of information they can handle
  - Rate: how fast they can absorb information

# Progress report structure

(descriptive rather than prescriptive)

- Front matter usually includes
  - Project title
  - Funding source (s)
  - Contract numbers
  - Funding period
  - Report date
  - Research organization
  - Staff and contact information

# Body of the report

- Introduction that would include
  - Brief project summary
  - Overview of project
  - Background and motivation
  - Briefly, where we are in the cycle
- Progress in design or implementation since last report
- Budget tables (\$\$\$ and other resources)

# Body of report continued. . .

- Problems to be addressed
- Solutions to problems or proposed approaches
- Schedule (team might be on schedule or may need to revise but this should be specified)
- Future work to be done before next review
- Brief conclusion

# Style in reports

- To guide readers/listeners through dense technical material,
  - Organize data into sections with informative headings and use a corresponding TOC for big reports.
  - Use transitions to guide reader/listener.
  - Support dense data with technical graphics.
  - Label all visuals properly and also refer/explain.
  - Use shorter rather than longer sentences.
  - Use shorter rather than longer paragraphs.
  - Use the active voice when possible.

# Style in reports continued. . .

- Choose diction thoughtfully.
  - Do we need to define terms? If so, how so?
  - Are we using jargon? Acronyms? (OK but assumes a small, expert community of readers.)
  - Have we considered the effect on readers/listeners from other cultures? From other perspectives?
- Create a writing process that allows for editing and revision re: grammar and style. Just as we do technical reviews, we must remember to proofread.