11. "Not Favors, but Fair Play": Black Technical Communicators in Mid-Twentieth-Century America

Edward A. Malone
Missouri University of Science and Technology

Abstract: This study problematizes dominant historical narratives of the technical communication profession—narratives that have traditionally focused on organizations like STC and IEEE PCS—by foregrounding the overlooked presence and contributions of Black technical communicators from the 1940s through the 1960s. Drawing on archival and genealogical research, the author identifies Black technical writers, editors, and illustrators who worked in U.S. government and industry during the profession's formative decades. Employing the antenarrative method of *microstoria*, the study emphasizes the individual stories of practitioners who have been largely invisible in the field's recorded history. The project offers the first attempt to compile a registry of mid-20th-century Black technical communicators, presenting reconstructed historical and biographical details that shed light on their professional lives and experiences. In doing so, it not only documents individual contributions but also provides a foundation for broader scholarly engagement with the roles these communicators played in shaping the profession. Ultimately, the study argues that recognizing and integrating their legacy into the history of technical communication would strengthen both the discipline and the profession by offering a more inclusive and accurate account of its development.

Keywords: history of technical communication, African Americans, employment opportunities, antinarrative, civil service examinations

One area of Black Technical and Professional Communication that has not received scholarly attention is the presence and contributions of Black technical communicators in the middle of the 20th century—roughly from 1935 to 1965.[1] During this period, a self-aware profession of technical communication emerged from a group of related occupations devoted to the communication of technical information, and the number of people working in the government and private sectors with job titles such as "technical writer," "technical editor," and "technical illustrator" proliferated. Many Black technical communicators were hired by the government and private

1. For an anticipation of the present study, see Malone (2023), p. 139. For a definition of Black TPC, see McKoy et al. (2020), along with representative scholarship on Black TPC found in that issue

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companies as technical communicators during this period, although they must have comprised only a small percentage of all technical communicators.

If someone were to look only at photographs in the publications of the earliest professional organizations in technical communication from 1954 to 1965, they would see very few Black technical communicators—far fewer than even female technical communicators, who experienced their own kind of invisibility, in addition to being underrepresented, during the early professional era. These organizations, which would later form the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and the IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS), left a photographic record that suggests Black technical communicators were scarcer than they actually were. From the conference proceedings, chapter newsletters, journals, and membership lists of these organizations, it is difficult to derive a clear sense of the presence and contributions of Black people to the emerging profession of technical communication. The researcher must look elsewhere for evidence of the lived experiences of Black technical communicators in mid-20th century America.

In this study, I located and identified Black people who worked as technical communicators in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. My goal was not to compile an exhaustive list, but to begin to compile a list that can inspire and serve as a resource for future research. Where did Black technical communicators work during these years? Who were they? What were their educational backgrounds? How did their careers develop over time? What experiences did they have as professionals and Black Americans before, during, and immediately after the Civil Rights era (1950–1963)? I was happy when I was able to answer the first two questions about an individual, even happier when I could answer three or four of the questions, and delighted on those rare occasions when I could answer the last question in any way.

I searched census records, especially the 1950 U.S. Census, which generally documented job titles more clearly and consistently than earlier censuses. I relied heavily on newspaper articles, especially in historically Black newspapers; articles such as feature stories, engagement and wedding announcements, and obituaries were helpful in identifying individuals who worked as technical writers, editors, and illustrators in earlier decades. Once I had identified a Black technical communicator, I was able to collect biographical information from a wide variety of genealogical sources. The lives of some of these technical communicators are better documented in these sources than others, as is the case in general. Occasionally, I came across interviews with individuals in which they spoke about their lived experiences in their own words. These interviews were relatively rare, however. Furthermore, I was able to inspect the federal civilian personnel files of several individuals. Most of my profiles were pieced together from fragments of information spread across multiple sources.[2]

2. The federal civilian personnel files are held by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The personnel files of individuals who ended their federal

Antenarrative has been defined as "the fragmented, nonlinear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation" that is constructed "out of the flow of lived experience" (Boje, 2001, pp. 1, 3). Taking an antenarrative approach for this study, I use the strategy of microstoria to focus on "stories of the 'little people' telling many histories that were omitted from the … grand narratives of great heroes or grand projects" (Boje, 2001, pp. 9, 11). This strategy necessitates an "improper" storytelling that is "fragmented, polyphonic, and collectively produced" (Boje, 2001, p. 1). Such a strategy can make possible a reconsideration of existing macrohistory by calling into question assumptions based on incomplete evidence, discovering gaps in the long-accepted versions of stories that had previously seemed complete, and undermining bias that wittingly or unwittingly causes narrative distortion.[3]

In this vein, my study is a reclamation project that brings visibility to individuals who have been predominantly invisible, expanding our knowledge of who mid-20th century technical communicators were, where they worked, and what they did. It also seeks to problematize existing historical narratives about the technical communication profession (for example, those that emphasize the roles of STC and IEEE) by calling attention to the hitherto unacknowledged presence and contributions of many Black technical communicators from the 1940s through the 1960s.[4]

As one of the anonymous reviewers of this manuscript emphasized, "this is Black history and Black history can be located in every aspect of American life—including in unearthing historic examples of Black technical communicators. Discrimination, oppression, and systemic racism are part and parcel of the Black experience in the US." The technical communicators discussed in my study "did not face discrimination (housing, employment, isolation, etc.) because they were technical communicators," but rather "because they were Black and most every Black person in America was facing the same things at the time." Thus, I ask readers to keep this caution in mind as they read this chapter, especially the section about housing discrimination.

In the following sections, I first discuss opportunities for Black technical communicators from the 1910s through the 1960s, with an emphasis

service before 1952 are archival (open to the public for inspection at NARA's St. Louis facility) while the personnel files of deceased individuals who ended their federal service after 1951 are non-archival (available in slightly redacted form by Freedom of Information Act request to NARA's Valmeyer, Illinois facility).

3. For examples of the antenarrative approach in technical communication scholarship, refer to Alexander & Edenfield (2024); Jones, Moore, and Walton (2016); and Petersen & Moeller (2016), among others.

4. For examples of historical narratives about the technical communication profession, see Bayne (2008); Connors (1982/2004); Kimball (2017); Kynell (2000); Kynell & Tebeaux (2009), and Malone (2011), as well as the series of STC-related reminiscences published in *Technical Communication* from 1989 to 1991.

on civil service examinations, and then I present a series of brief profiles of mid-20th-century Black technical communicators who worked in government and industry. I conclude by offering several hypotheses, or antenarrative bets, in lieu of definitive conclusions, inviting future research to expand, reconsider, and revise established narratives about the history of the technical communication profession.

Early Opportunities for Black Technical Communicators

In the first half of the 20th century, civil service examinations offered Black people some of their best opportunities to become career technical communicators, at least in theory. Civil service examinations were competitive tests that allowed government agencies to identify and rank qualified applicants for government jobs. These examinations gradually became a standard requirement for many government jobs after the passage of the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883, which created the Civil Service Commission as a regulatory body to oversee the federal workforce, including the hiring of civil servants based on merit rather than political patronage.[5] Under the new civil service regime (1883–1979), the percentage of Black Americans employed in civil service jobs rose from approximately 0.6% in 1881 to 16.6% in 1979 (see Table 11.1), even though the merit-based system was marred by racism and sexism.

The earliest announcement I have found for a civil service examination for a technical communicator was published in newspapers around the country in 1907. Specifically, the 1907 examination was created "to fill a vacancy in the position of assistant technical editor, $115 per month, in the U.S. Geological Survey, and similar vacancies that may occur" ("News," 1907, p. 16). The examination had three parts: a thesis on one of two or three given subjects (presumably to be written at a post office or other designated site and evaluated later); general and technical training (to be "rated on application"); and general and special experience (also to be "rated on application"). The Geological Survey was seeking an individual, at least 20 years old, who had a degree in civil engineering as well as specific kinds of experience, including technical writing experience. Individuals without such training and experience would "not be admitted to the examination" ("News," 1907, p. 16).

Later civil service examinations for technical editor positions probably had similar gatekeeping to this 1907 examination. Black male engineers and female engineers were statistically scarce at this time (see Table 11.2), but could they be

5. Here and elsewhere, I use the term "civil service" to refer to the vast majority of civilian employees in the executive branch of the federal government. I do not use the term to mean military personnel, employees of the federal judicial and legislative branches, or state government employees. The number of civil service positions subject to examination reportedly rose from 10.5% in 1883 to 75% by 1930 (White, 1933, p. 249).

barred from taking such an examination? The law did not permit the federal government to exclude applicants from examinations because of their race, but it is not difficult to imagine how it could have been done through a discriminatory interpretation of qualifications, restricted access to information about an exam, or other mechanisms. After an examination had been administered, the infamous "rule of three" allowed appointing officers to choose from the top three ranked eligibles, and some officers used this mechanism to bypass Black eligibles on their lists (Golightly & Hemphill, 1945, p. 27). Employers could also terminate Black employees after appointment on the pretext of unsatisfactory job performance or some other reason (King, 2007).

Table 11.1. Percentage of Black Employees in Federal Civil Service (by Selected Year)[a]

Year	Number of All Employees in Federal Civil Service [b]	Number of All Black Employees in Federal Civil Service	Percentage of Total
1881	107,000	620	0.6
1892	171,000	2,393	1.4
1910	384,088	22,540	5.9
1930	608,915	54,684	9.0
1944 [c]	2,295,614	273,971	11.9
1965	2,233,615	308,675	13.8
1979	2,419,047	402,358	16.6

[a] Source of Data: Hayes (1941, p. 153) for 1881, 1892, and 1910; Golightly and Hemphill (1945, p. 28) for 1944; and King (2007, pp. 241, 248–249) for 1930, 1965, and 1979. More than 60 years after the passage of the Pendleton Act in 1883, Davis and Golightly (1945) observed, "The appearance of the Civil Service Commission marked the beginning of a steady increase in Negro employment" (p. 337). (Note: This chapter reproduces historical wording from archival sources. Period terms such as "colored" and "Negro/Negroes" appear only in quoted material and source titles.) The years selected for Table 11.1 highlight this general upward trend, though they do not capture the occasional decline from year to year. Nor do they reflect that Black workers were overrepresented in low-level positions, often employed in roles below their educational and experiential qualifications.

[b] Unless otherwise noted, it is assumed that the numbers in this column include all classified and unclassified civil service positions in the executive branch. Only classified positions were subject to the Pendleton Act. In the 1944 sample, 30% (82,183) of the 273,971 Black civil-service employees held classified positions, while 51% of all civil-service employees did (Golightly & Hemphill, 1945, p. 33)—meaning that Black employees were underrepresented in classified positions. Although the number of civil-service employees increased significantly during World War II, many employees in unclassified positions were let go after the war, with Black workers disproportionately affected.

[c] The numbers for 1944 represent a sample of 85% of all full-time civil-service employees in the continental United States (Golightly & Hemphill, 1945, p. 21). The source specifies that all employees of the Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and Justice and field employees of the Post Office were excluded. Also likely excluded were employees in the territories of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guam, as well as at overseas military bases and other international sites.

Table 11.2. Percentage of Technical Engineers Who Were Female and/or Black (by Selected U.S. Census Year)[a]

Year	Total Number of Technical Engineers	Total Number of Female Engineers	Percentage	Total Number of Black Engineers	Percentage
1910	88,755	11	0.01	175	0.20
1930	226,249	113	0.05	351	0.16
1950	527,190	6,660	1.30	1,770 (1,620 male, 150 female)	0.34

[a] *The numbers for female technical engineers (civil, electrical, mechanical, mining, chemical, and metallurgical) in 1910 and 1930 come from Dempsey (1933, p. 71). The numbers for Black technical engineers in 1910 and 1930 come from Duke (1941, p. 102). Both Dempsey and Duke report the same total number of technical engineers for each census year. The 1950 numbers for all technical engineers, female technical engineers, and Black technical engineers come from U.S. Bureau (1955, p. 29), which also divides Black engineers into male and female.*
When interpreting the 1950 numbers, it is important to consider that women, comprising about half of the total U.S. population, had a much larger potential labor pool than Black Americans, who made up around 10%, contributing to the disparity in their representation in engineering.
Census data should be used cautiously due to incompleteness (not everyone was counted), misrepresentation (not all respondents were accurate or honest), and sampling. The numbers for 1950, for example, are not actual counts, but rather statistical estimates extrapolated from an analysis of 3.5% of the population. It is also possible that some locomotive and stationary engineers were confused with technical engineers and vice versa. Surveyors were sometimes treated as civil engineers. Aeronautical engineers became a category of technical engineers in the 1950 census.

Moreover, sex-based discrimination was officially sanctioned, further complicating Black women's prospects for being hired under the merit-based civil service system. An 1870 law gave the head of any government department the discretion to hire a woman for any "clerkship." This law paradoxically led to the discretionary exclusion of all women from many civil service examinations (for example, 60% of the exams in the first half of 1919) until a Civil Service Commission ruling opened all examinations to all qualified men and women in November 1919. However, the ruling reaffirmed that sex-based hiring was discretionary (Nienburg, 1920). Thus, even though all exams were open to both sexes, appointing officers could still hire only women as nurses, only men as prison guards, etc.

This merit-based system was especially weak during the Woodrow Wilson presidency (1913–1921), when the government began requiring applicants to submit photographs of themselves (King, 2007). Yet the system created more job opportunities for Black people than would have been available without the system.

In the late 1920s, the *Baltimore Afro-American* published announcements for civil service examinations for technical editor positions with the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service ("Civil," 1927a) and the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Mines ("U.S.," 1929). The Forest Service did not specify desired qualifications, nor did it interpret "examination" in the traditional sense of a test:

"Competitors will not be required to report for examination at any place, but will be rated on their education, training, experience, and fitness, and samples of work to be filed with the application" ("Civil," 1927b). By contrast, the Bureau of Mines required an examination and "a combination of engineering and editorial or journalistic experience" ("Positions," 1929). The Baltimore Afro-*American* may have received these announcements from a government employee, a representative of the National Urban League, or a member of its own staff who had read them in another newspaper. Whatever the source may have been, the intent of their publication was clear: to encourage readers to compete for these positions.

A 1935 editorial in the *California Eagle*, another historically Black newspaper, revealed that a high-ranking Black presidential appointee—himself a beneficiary of the patronage system—was actively encouraging African Americans to take technical editor examinations. Under the title "Not Favors, but Fair Play," the editorial seemed to uncut his recruitment effort with weary skepticism:

> Simultaneously with the arrival of a report from Dr. William J. Thompkins, U.S. Recorder of Deeds, that on July 15 there would be United States Civil Service examinations for Senior Technical Editor at $4600 a year; Technical Editor, $3800 a year; Associate Technical Editor, $3200 a year, in which he advised Negroes to compete, many reports reached the editor's desk stating that segregation and discrimination was rampant in all government setups. ("Not Favors," 1935, p. 10)

Thus, while the government appeared to be recruiting Black candidates for high-paying technical and scientific jobs, it was widely understood that they could not expect "fair play," even in an examination system that ostensibly promised it.

Responding to pressure from labor leader A. Philip Randolph, the NAACP, and other advocates, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in 1941 to directly address employment discrimination. The order prohibited certain forms of discrimination in federal departments and agencies involved in vocational and training programs for defense production, as well as in defense companies under government contract. It also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate violations. In 1948, responding to ongoing pressure from civil rights advocates, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9980, mandating that all federal personnel actions be based solely on merit and fitness and establishing the Fair Employment Board to oversee compliance. However, enforcement of the order's provisions was soon called into question.

In an August 1948 letter to the *Washington Post*, **Alvin Aubrey Webb (nicknamed "Chick," 1911–1996)** complained that Truman's order did little to prevent discrimination in civil service hiring. Webb had accumulated at least 13 years of civil service experience in various messenger and clerk positions at the Department of Treasury (1931–1939), the New York Naval Yard (1939–1940), and the

National Housing Agency (1944–1945). Nevertheless, when he started looking for a new government job in 1948, he experienced "the prejudicial run-around and by-pass that so many other colored job-seekers are subjected to daily by personnel officers" (Webb, 1948, p. 6). He claimed to know personally many people who had had run-ins with racist personnel directors in government. The Civil Service Commission, he wrote, "is apparently helpless to do anything about rectifying this infringement on its merit system during peacetime," even though Truman's executive order had directed all federal government agencies to appoint an officer to ensure fair employment practices (Webb, 1948, p. 6). Either because of or in spite of his public protest, Webb secured a clerk's position with the Veterans Administration in November 1948. He remained a clerk in different positions with the VA until September 1950 and then sold insurance for Progressive Life for the next six months.

Drawing on years of moonlighting experience as a journalist, Webb took the information specialist examination in October 1950, earning a strong GS-8 rating. Hoping to become an editorial clerk, he applied for the position that same month (Taylor, 1950; Sweeney, 1950), but the application stalled. In April 1951, he accepted a probationary appointment as a Property and Supply Clerk GS-4 with the Department of Commerce's National Production Authority (NPA). In August 1951, he applied again for an editorial clerk position, but before any action could be taken, a background check—conducted in connection with his probationary appointment—led to his dismissal from the NPA. The stated reasons for the dismissal were "neglect in discharge of financial obligations, lack of moral responsibility and integrity, and record of failure to properly discharge family obligations."[6] His outspoken nature, perceived over-ambition, and financial struggles may have all contributed to his dismissal in a system rife with bias.

Later Opportunities for Black Technical Communicators

For more than two decades, articles in historically Black newspapers presented technical writing as one of several new fields that offered opportunities for Black Americans and yet were "completely unfamiliar to the average Negro job applicant" (Granger, 1957, p. 8). The Black press tried to make readers aware of these fields. Writing near the end of WWII, Preston (1945) told Black college graduates that they could aspire to be more than "clerks, typists, and stenographers"

6. Webb's federal civilian personnel file at NARA's St. Louis facility contains many letters between his employers and his creditors, going back as far as 1935. The letters illustrate the aggressive debt collection practices that were common before the passage of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act of 1977, which now prohibits creditors from contacting employers of customers who are in arrears on their bills. Information about Webb's life after leaving the NPA is sparse. In the 1950s, he worked as a reporter and editor for the *New York Age* and the *New York Amsterdam News*. In 1952, *Ebony* magazine announced his marriage to Lillian Waring, the NAACP's chief accountant ("New York," 1952).

and advised them to consider several up-and-coming occupational fields, such as technical writing. An anonymous writer for the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) News Service informed readers that technical writing and editing was a new field welcoming to women in particular ("Woman's World," 1959).[7] An anonymous writer for the *New York Amsterdam News* assured Black high school students that, if they stayed in school and applied themselves, they would be able to make a good living after graduation. Technical writing was just one of "the jobs that are looking for people. Not just white people. Negro people. Puerto Rican people. Good people." To bolster their hope, the writer added, "Things are changing. Equal opportunity is in business" ("Stay," 1966, p 34). Offering career advice to young Black people, both McKinney (1966) and Marshall (1968) recommended the field of technical writing and described at length what a technical writer does. McKinney referred his readers to the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers, the previous name of STC, for more information.

Prime Alexander Norman (a.k.a. Prime T. Norman, 1930–1988) found hope and possibilities in technical communication. He was a firm believer that art in general and technical illustration in particular could help Black youth. Born in Georgia and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts, Prime came from a family that owned and operated a laundry, and he became an expert in the family's trade, but his true love was drawing ("Prime," 1988). Although he dropped out of high school and regretted it, he managed to complete his secondary education while in the U.S. Army. In the late 1960s, Prime tried to make a difference in a Brooklyn neighborhood by teaching art to children. He felt that being able to draw would empower the children by giving them a means of self-expression and the skills necessary for later employment. In support of this goal, he founded the African Technical Illustration Organization (ATIO) as a vehicle for his instruction. Despite his employment struggles and frequent clashes with the legal system, he made his mark as a serious artist when his drawings were showcased in a public art exhibition in his hometown of Springfield (Andrewes, 1970).

Two newspaper articles, published approximately one year apart, reported on Prime's organization and efforts. The first was written by a Black reporter, George Todd, well known for his articles in the *New York Amsterdam News*. The second was written by a white reporter, Patricia Burstein, who would become famous in later years as the author of celebrity biographies. The contrast between the two articles—the first, sympathetic; the second, far less so—is striking. The headline of Todd's article was "Encourages Youth: Artist Aids Kids while Developing Self," while the headline of Burstein's article was "Dropout, 37, Trains Kid [sic] in Art to Free Thinking." The lead paragraphs of the two articles were also quite

7. The *Negro Newspaper* Publishers Association, also known as the *National Negro* Publishers Association, was founded in 1940. It changed its name to the *National Newspaper* Publishers Association in 1953. Its acronym has remained the same throughout its history: NNPA.

different in tone and emphasis. Todd (1966) wrote, "Prime T. Norman, a slender, bearded and serious young man, is deeply concerned with the future of black youths in Brooklyn and he is anxious to do something constructive to help them toward a more useful life" (p. 19). Burstein (1967) wrote, "The 37-year-old, bearded Negro said he did not know if he was expressing himself clearly, if anyone would understand what he was saying because 'I'm a high school dropout'" (p. B3).

In the 1950s and 1960s, there were many vocational schools that prepared students for technical communication jobs, and a few of them used historically Black newspapers to recruit Black students. For example, a new aircraft technical writing course at Los Angeles Trade-Technical Junior College was the topic of a 1951 article in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* ("Aircraft," 1951). Rather than paying for a classified or display ad, the college may have sent a press release (a pre-written article) to the newspaper, hoping they would publish it as filler and thereby advertise the course for free. Such press releases were a common marketing tool of universities and colleges. In the early 1960s, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* published both classified and display ads (e.g., Untitled, 1961) for a technical writing course offered by the S&T Associates School, one of many private vocational schools in the Los Angeles area. The *Philadelphia Tribune* published ads for technical writing and other courses being offered at the Philco Technical Center (Untitled, 1963) and the Community College of Philadelphia (Untitled, 1967b). Most of these courses were taught at night and on weekends for adults who had full-time jobs during the day.

One school that was very effective in publicizing employment opportunities in technical communication was the Letcher Art Center in Washington DC. In the mid-1950s, this school ran several display ads in the *Washington Afro American*, touting the success of its graduates in finding art-related employment, mostly in the federal government in the DC area. The jobs of the graduates listed in one 1957 display ad included upholsterer, sign painter, exhibition specialist (at the Smithsonian), engineering draftsman, and technical illustrator ("Brotherhood," 1957). I suspect that all the listed graduates were Black people, and not just because the six illustrators I was able to further identify were Black.[8] The ad features

8. Of the thirteen illustrators listed in the 1957 display ad, ten of them worked for the federal government and three for private companies. Because I was able to confirm that six of the illustrators were Black, I included them in Appendices A and B as other government and industry technical communicators: Nathaniel Briscoe, Augustus Budd, Ana Aikens Edmonds, John Locksley, Jon Massey, and Tracy Spinks. I did not include the remaining seven illustrators in Appendices A and B because I could not confirm they were Black, but my strong hunch is that they were: Reginald Brooke, Solar Enterprise; Robert Exum, Department of Health; Christopher Ford, Quartermaster Corps; Clifford Harris, Department of Interior; Lawrence Roland, Fort Belvoir; Edward Ross, Presentation Inc.; and Charles A. Thompson, Bureau of Standards. George Olden was listed in the display ad as a graphic artist for CBS, but I had already discovered from other sources that Olden (see Appendix A) worked as an illustrator for the government at a much earlier date.

a classroom photograph of Black students at work. The text of the ad states, "The Record below [referring to the list of graduates] clearly shows Brotherhood in America is growing. Many of these private companies and government agencies are now employing our graduates on their ability to produce" ("Brotherhood," 1957, p. 21). Although it was self-serving, the ad conveyed a message of hope that times might really be changing, and the message was backed up by concrete evidence: specific names of graduates and their employers.

There were many university courses in technical writing throughout the 20th century (Fountain, 1938; Kynell, 2000), but there were only a few formal degree programs in technical communication at universities in the 1950s. The first such program, started in 1953, was the master's degree in technical writing at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; the second, started in 1956, was the bachelor's degree in technical writing and publishing at Simmons College; and the third, started in 1958, was the bachelor's degree program in technical writing and editing at Carnegie Tech's Margaret Morrison College (Malone, 2011).

RPI's English department apparently advertised its program informally at other universities. Now in her 80s, La Bonnie Bianchi Townsend (telephone interview, 21 February 2023) told me that she learned about RPI's program from a poster she saw at George Washington University, where she was taking a summer course in partial differential equations. The poster "looked like an engraved wedding invitation," she recalled. She had already finished her engineering degree at Howard University, and rather than accept an offer of a teaching assistantship at Stanford University, she applied to RPI, was accepted with a fellowship, and moved to Troy, New York, graduating in June 1960 with a master's degree in technical writing (Rensselaer, 1960). Not only was she reportedly the first woman to graduate with a degree in electrical engineering from Howard, but she was also likely the first Black person to earn a university degree in technical writing ("Woman," 1961).

Some private companies sought to recruit technical communicators by placing display ads in historically Black publications. Before the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) gains of the early 1960s, such display ads were practically non-existent in these venues.[9] In the second half of the 1960s, however, they

9. Companies also advertised through classified ads, which were smaller and less expensive than display ads, but I made no attempt to count classified ads. The EEO gains of the 1960s were built on decades of hard work by organizations such as the National Urban League, NAACP, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, as well as on World War II-era pressures for labor equality and key government actions like President Roosevelt's 1941 Executive Order 8802 and President Truman's 1948 Executive Orders 9980 and 9981 (the latter desegregating the military). More immediately, however, they resulted from President Kennedy's 1961 Executive Order 10925 (establishing a committee to ensure EEO in government agencies and by government contractors), the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin), and President Johnson's 1965 Executive Order 11246 (expanding the 1964 Act's enforcement framework to government contractors and requiring affirmative action to promote EEO).

appeared occasionally. Table 11.3 lists representative companies that placed such display ads in Black newspapers and magazines. Each of the aerospace-and-defense manufacturers (large companies producing high-tech systems under government contracts) included "technical writer" in a list of multiple available positions. Notably, the ad for Royer and Roger, a technical service contractor, sought only technical writers. Royer and Roger, Inc., was one of many small companies in the "Brass Age" (Kimball, 2017, p. 335) that contracted technical services, such as technical writing, commercial art, and engineering project management, primarily to government agencies, particularly the military. The purpose of their ad may have been to meet federal EEO requirements while focusing on their specific need for technical writers.

Not including announcements for civil service examinations, the government's advertising of technical communication positions in historically Black newspapers also began with the emergence of new EEO policies. One example is the 1963 display ad that was published in the *Jackson Advocate*, announcing examinations for several positions at Fort McClellan, Alabama, including Technical Publications Editor ("Fort," 1963). It is not clear whether the ad was paid for by the Fort or constructed free from a press release, but newspapers did not usually format press releases as advertisements. Another example is the display ad for the Federal Job Information Center in the *Cleveland Call and Post* in 1967 (Untitled, 1967a). I do not know when the first Federal Job Information Center opened, but the earliest reference I could find to one on Newspapers.com was in a Des Moines newspaper in 1962. Mentions of these centers proliferated in the second half of the 1960s. The 1967 ad lists 33 federal government positions in the Cleveland area, including one for a technical editor.

Table 11.3. Examples of Companies Using Display Ads to Advertise Technical Writer Positions in Historically Black Publications (1963–1968)

Company	Publication	Year
Philco Houston	*Baltimore Afro-American* and *Philadelphia Tribune*	**1963**
Royer and Roger [a]	*Baltimore Afro-American*	**1965**
Lockheed-Georgia Company [b]	*Louisiana Weekly* and *Ebony*	**1965**
Douglas Aircraft Company's Missile and Space Systems Division	*Los Angeles Sentinel*	**1965**
Pratt and Whitney Aircraft	*Baltimore Afro-American*	**1967**
General Dynamics	*New York Amsterdam News*	**1968**
General Electric	*Norfolk Journal and Guide*	**1968**

[a] *Royer and Roger, Inc., was trying to hire 120 technical writers. For more information about this company, see Francis H. Royer's testimony before Congress (U.S. House, 1960, pp. 5122–5127).*

[b] *See Patton (2021) for a book-length discussion of EEO policies at the Lockheed-Georgia Company during this period.*

Examples of Black Technical Communicators in Government and Industry

Formidable institutional challenges notwithstanding, many Black people found work as technical editors, writers, and illustrators in government as well as private industry in mid-twentieth-century America. In this section, the profiles of these technical communicators, cobbled together from many different sources, can provide only glimpses of their educational backgrounds, employment histories, and personal and professional achievements. They also offer insight into the ways these individuals used their communication skills and economic security to engage in social, political, and personal work. Some are known to scholars in other disciplines; most remain unknown to everyone except their relatives and friends.

I have divided this section into two subsections: one featuring technical communicators employed in state and federal government and the other featuring those employed in private companies. Although Black people worked as technical communicators in many federal and state agencies, most of the government communicators profiled here were civilian employees of the three main branches of the military. After introducing a technical communicator who worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in North Carolina, I profile five civilian employees of the Air Force, four of the Army, and two of the Navy. My profiles of technical communicators in private companies are not organized so systematically, although I do group those who worked at the same locations—for example, at companies in Buffalo and at Remington Rand UNIVAC in St. Paul. For my profiles, I chose individuals whose lives were better documented than others and sometimes individuals who worked with them at the same location.

For each subsection, a corresponding appendix appears at the end of the chapter, listing other Black technical communicators I was able to identify. These appendices provide only brief information, and the information is only as reliable as my sources. For example, a gossip columnist in the *Philadelphia Tribune* identified now-famous Fran Ross as a technical editor at McGraw-Hill ("Social," 1961), while other biographical sources described her as a proofreader and copy editor for McGraw-Hill. Can the gossip columnist be trusted on this detail? Nevertheless, I included Ross in Appendix B because at times she may have worked on technical books for McGraw-Hill. For each individual in the tables, I cite at least one representative source to help future researchers locate them.

Some of these individuals worked as technical communicators only briefly; others did so long term. Not all of them held the formal job title of "technical writer," "technical editor," or "technical illustrator," but I included them in Appendices A and B if I found evidence that they engaged in technical communication. My decisions were guided by a specific definition of "technical communicator": an employee in government or industry whose main job responsibility was to engage in activities such as writing, editing, or illustrating in order to help specific audiences understand

and/or use specialized information or technologies. I realize that the definition of a technical communicator must be broader or narrower than this in other contexts, but my focus is mid-20th-century employees in government and industry.

Inclusion decisions sometimes required me to distinguish technical communication from related fields like journalism, public relations, and engineering. For example, I included Sherman Briscoe and Lucius Henegan, information specialists for the USDA, in Appendix A because I found evidence that their roles at times involved significant technical communication alongside journalism and public relations work. However, I did not include other information specialists such as **George Emanuel Norford (1912 or 1913–2004)**, Chief of the Negro Interest Unit in the War Department's Public Information Division, and **Lemuel Eugene Graves (1915–1972)**, Chief of the News and Writing Section of the Marshall Plan's Economic Cooperation Administration. Both men held prominent communication roles in government, but I found no evidence that their work extended beyond news dissemination and public relations.[10] Similarly, I did not include artist **Bernadine Celeste Wesley (née Blessitt, a.k.a. Warren, 1919–2006)** because her work as an engineering draftsman appeared to focus on design rather than technical communication.

Employed in Government

Dazelle Beatrice Lowe (née Foster, 1894–1984)

Lowe's career falls mainly within the pre-professional era in technical communication, but I included her in this study because she retired in the 1950s.[11] Lowe (see Figure 11.1) was a home demonstration agent, paid fully or partly with federal funds, to show women how to use household appliances and employ best practices in homemaking. She engaged in oral technical communication and report

10. Many Black journalists worked as government information specialists during this era. They included Edwin Bush Jourdain (1900–1986), Constance Eleanor Daniel (née Hazel, 1893–1962), Dorothy Hanley Davis (née Hodge, a.k.a. Johnson, 1916–2004), Antoine Higgins Fuhr (1892–1980), Theodore Roosevelt Poston (1906–1974), and Alvin Ellsworth White (1895–1985). Retired Colonel Frank Martin Snowden (1885–1977) was an atypical member of this group because he was not a journalist. The work of information specialists with a "press" specialization typically focused on public-facing communication tasks such as gathering information, writing press releases, and giving speeches, but the content of their communications was sometimes technical.

11. I did not include George Washington Carver (1864–1943) and Lewis Howard Latimer (1848–1928) in this study because their careers ended before technical communicators began their professionalization project. In his analysis of Carver's technical bulletins for farmers, Gresham (1979) treated Carver as a technical communicator without diminishing Carver's contributions and achievements as a scientist. Latimer, who illustrated new technologies for patent applications, might also be treated as a technical communicator, although no one in our discipline has done so, to my knowledge. Latimer was affiliated with both Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison.

writing from 1916 until her retirement in 1955 and supervised other women in similar roles. In her study of report writing in North Carolina canning clubs, Haller (1997) provided some background information that illuminates Lowe's extension work, but Haller's study focused on the years 1912 to 1916 and did not mention Lowe. Although Lowe's work has received some scholarly attention (e.g., Engelhardt, 2009; Jones, 2002), so far as I know, no one has yet written about Lowe as a technical communicator.

Born in Louisburg, North Carolina, she moved to the nearby capital city, Raleigh, where she attended school and worked as a domestic servant ("District Home," 1955; "Raleigh," 2011). In 1916, she graduated from Shaw University with a "Diploma from the academy" and certificates in domestic science and dressmaking ("Shaw," 1916). Although she would later take summer courses at Boston University, Simmons College, Hampton Institute, and Cornell University, I have found no evidence that she completed a bachelor's degree ("Lowe," 1984). She was hired on an emergency basis in 1916 to show Black women in Davidson County, NC, how to preserve food and use a fireless cooker (a container that allowed heated food to retain its heat and continue cooking without fire) ("Mrs. Dazelle," 1967).

Figure 11.1. Photo of Dazelle Beatrice Lowe (née Foster, 1894–1984). (Used with permission by NC State University Archives Photograph Collection Home Demonstration Work UA 023.009)

Lowe was teaching home economics in Raleigh at Washington Graded Public School in 1919 and Crosby-Garfield School in 1921, but she left teaching in 1923 when she was offered a full-time job as a home demonstration agent for Black families in Wake County as part of the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service ("Raleigh," 2011; "Mrs. Dazelle," 1967). In a technical communication activity reminiscent of Ellen Swallow Richards' Rumford Kitchen, she helped design a model kitchen and dining room as an exhibit for the 1924 Negro Fair in Raleigh, North Carolina (Lippincott, 2003; "N.C. State," 1924).

By 1925, Lowe had assumed supervisory duties, leading a small team of agents throughout North Carolina ("Negro Home," 1925). Her duties included organizing state-wide meetings and filing annual reports of activities (for example, see Lowe, 1931) as well as demonstrating the latest home technologies and improved methods. The number of Black women working as agents (as technical communicators) in North Carolina increased over the years, apparently reaching 51 by 1955 ("District Home," 1955). In the year of her retirement, the USDA recognized her with a Superior Service Award for her accomplishments ("District Home," 1955).

Cleophes Foraker Bruster (1909–1985)

At least two Black technical communicators worked at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver in the 1950s. According to the U.S. Census, Bruster (sometimes spelled "Brewster" in sources) was working as a civilian technical illustrator at Lowry in 1950. A native of Oklahoma, and the son of a Baptist minister, Bruster studied fine arts at Colorado College in Colorado Springs (c. 1927–1931) and Kansas State Teachers College (now called Emporia State University) and later took courses in engineering and drafting at the University of Denver (*Pikes*, 1929; "Negro Recruits," 1942). Throughout the 1930s, he worked as a commercial artist in Chicago, Boston, New York, and Kansas City as well as Denver ("Negro Recruits," 1942). He was elected vice president of the Colorado Springs branch of the NAACP in 1935—evidence of his political involvement and standing in his community ("Branch News," 1936). For several weeks in Spring 1938, a display ad in the *Denver Star* announced, "Cleo F. Bruster, Commercial Artist, Now with Artex Printing Service" ("Cleo," 1938). According to his draft registration card, he had his own sign-making company in Denver in 1940. During his army service (1942–1945), he created signs and posters for the squadron at Minter Field in California ("Negro Recruits," 1942). I do not know when his employment at Lowry began and ended, but by 1958, he was working as a technical illustrator at the Glenn L. Miller Company in Denver ("Denver," 2011).[12]

12. An archivist at NARA's St. Louis facility told me that Bruster's federal employment ended in 1956. I can only surmise that it ended at Lowry because I have not seen his personnel file.

William Arthur Walters (1918–2009)

Walters also worked as a civilian technical communicator at Lowry Air Force Base, but he is remembered chiefly in connection with the Tuskegee Airmen. An Oklahoma native who graduated from a Denver high school in 1936, Walters enlisted in the Army Air Corp in May 1941, completed the radio operators' course at Illinois' Chanute Field a few months later, and was assigned to Moton Field in Tuskegee, Alabama ("Completes," 1941; Culver, 2010). He helped to keep the radios working properly for the now famous squadron of African American pilots (Culver, 2010). After the war, Walters earned a degree in mechanical industries at Tuskegee Institute; by 1950, he was teaching electronics at Stillman College in Alabama (Ater, 2019; Culver, 2010). He moved back to Denver and taught electronics at Lowry Air Force Base and later Metropolitan College (Culver, 2010). A 1961 article about his wife identified him specifically as a technical writer at Lowry (Hilliard, 1961). His obituary mentioned that he taught technical writing while at Lowry (Culver, 2010). Walters and other Tuskegee veterans were awarded congressional gold medals in 2007, and Walters' voice can still be heard in an exhibit at the National Park Service's Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site in Alabama (Ater, 2019; McDonald, 2007).

Ella Louise Anderson (née Mayle, 1924–2011)[13]

Several Black technical communicators had long careers at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB) and the Defense Electronics Supply Center (DESC) near Dayton, Ohio. One of them was Ella Anderson, a technical editor. She grew up in and around Zanesville, Ohio, and was mentioned frequently in the local newspaper for her achievements in school and other activities (Ohio, 2023; "Senior," 1942). After graduating from high school in 1942, she moved to Dayton, where her older sister was already living, and began working as a typist at Patterson Field ("Colored," 1942; "Wedding," 1943). A year later, she married a soldier, George Anderson, eventually a long-time employee for General Motors in the Dayton area ("Wedding," 1943; "George," 2007). By the 1950 U.S. Census, Ella's role had changed from typist at Patterson to technical editor at WPAFB. It was not uncommon during this period for typists, stenographers, and secretaries to become technical editors. In my research, I have found many examples of this career progression. Ella later moved with other technical communicators to the Defense Electronics Supply Center (DESC), also in the Dayton area, which supplied electronic spare parts to all branches of the military ("Ella," 2011). She worked on DESC documentation and publications. According to her death certificate, she had an associate's degree, but I do not know in what subject ("Ohio," 2023).

13. In this paragraph, Ella and her spouse George have the same last name, so I use "Ella" consistently rather than "Anderson" to avoid confusion. I follow this practice in other profiles when the use of a woman's married name would be anachronistic in one part of a profile or when family members (e.g., Cecil and Joseph Lewis) share the same last name.

Lillian Clark (née Teal, a.k.a. French, 1914–1988)

Another technical illustrator at WPAFB was Lillian Clark. The 1950 U.S. Census for Dayton identifies Lillian as an "artist illustrator" and her husband, Arthur, as an "electronic scientist" at an "army air field." The use of "army air field" in the 1950 census was a misnomer because the Army Air Corps' Wright Field and Patterson Field had already been merged as Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in 1947. Arthur once said, "The U.S. government didn't start hiring African-American men and women until after about 1940, except for maids or elevator operators or men who would push the broom or mop" ("Clark," 1991). Most of the pre-World War II government jobs available to Black people—such as messenger, porter, file clerk, typist, etc.—were at the lower end of the job hierarchy. Arthur and Lillian were fortunate to secure two professional jobs at the same military installation at such an early date. Lillian worked as an artist for the Air Materiel Command at Wright Field/WPAFB from 1946 to 1957 and an art director at DESC from 1957 to 1975 (Ferris-Olson, 1996). Her work for the military in these decades would have involved technical illustration.

Lillian had married her first husband when she was only 15 ("Married," 1929), but that marriage did not last long. She met and married Arthur, her second husband, at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, before World War II (Ferris-Olson, 1996). He graduated in 1942 with a degree in electrical engineering, she in same year with a degree in fine arts ("Lillian," 1988). While in college, the couple noticed how many "minority students" were having to drop out of school because they could not afford to finish their degrees ("K.U.," 1991). The couple agreed that, if they ever had the financial means to do so, they would create a scholarship for minority students at the University of Kansas ("K.U.," 1991). Before his death in 1995, in both of their names, Arthur pledged $300,000 to the university for minority scholarships, one in engineering and one in fine arts (Ferris-Olson, 1996; "K.U.," 1991).

Booker Taliaferro Whiteside (1912–1994)

As a technical editor at WPAFB in the 1940s and 1950s, Whiteside must have known Ella Anderson and Lillian Clark. Born in Troy, Alabama, Whiteside moved with his family to Hamilton, Ohio, at a young age ("Booker," 1994). In the 1930s, he earned a degree from Wilberforce State College, located about 20 miles east of Dayton ("Dunn," 1938). He worked as a laborer in the county engineer's office (not the county's "eugenics" office, as the newspaper reported in his wedding announcement); later, he worked as a courthouse deputy ("Dunn," 1938; "Named," 1941). In the 1940s and 1950s, city directories in Dayton identified residents by name, address, telephone number, and job title. Whiteside is listed as an editor at the Air Service Command in 1944, an editor at WPAFB in 1950 and 1951, and a data worker at Gentile Air Force Depot in 1959 ("Dayton," 1944). Thus, he seems to have moved out of technical editing and into data processing. Just

like Anderson, he retired from the Defense Electronics Supply Center (DESC) in the 1970s ("Booker," 2011). His death certificate classified his occupation as "computer systems analysts and scientists" (Ohio, 2023).

Mamie Elizabeth Wiggins (née Jones, 1910–2011)

Like the Air Force, the U.S. Army employed Black technical communicators in the 1940s, 1950s, and especially the 1960s. Wiggins worked as a technical editor at the Frankford Arsenal in Philadelphia from 1951 to 1976; she also worked at the Naval Aviation Supply Depot in some capacity before retiring in 1982 ("Her Mission," 1991; Morrison, 2011). Born in Georgia, the daughter of a hotel chef, she moved north at a young age with her family. She dropped out of West Philadelphia High School so she could work full-time at a department store. About 25 years later, she completed her high school education at night while editing technical manuals during the day at the arsenal (Carey, 2000). It is surprising that she was hired as an editor in 1951 without a high school diploma, but her prior employment with Curtis Publishing in Philadelphia may have opened that door (Morrison, 2011).

The arsenal was a huge complex—a city within a city—where munitions were designed and manufactured and from which a steady stream of reports, manuals, and other print documents flowed. To further develop professionally, Wiggins attended Temple University for two years, hoping to earn a degree in writing, but other responsibilities (including parenting a child with severe asthma) prevented her from graduating (Carey, 2000). In her retirement, she made a significant contribution to the Philadelphia community as the co-founder and first director of the St. Barnabas Mission, a homeless shelter that is still in operation. She cooked meals, washed sheets, and tried to find jobs and housing for people ("Her Mission," 1991; Carey, 2000). "Associating with the public keeps you young and alive, along with helping other people," she told a reporter (Carey, 2000). Wiggins lived to be over 100 years old.

Ethel Louise Puryear (née Gardin, 1915–1996)

Puryear worked as a technical editor for the Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, in the 1940s and 1950s. Born in Asheville, North Carolina, she received her schooling in South Carolina, graduating with a teaching degree from Claflin College in Orangeburg ("Teacher," 1996). She told a reporter that she moved north to Long Island in the late 1930s "after being spat upon for talking with a white man" (Chang, 1981, p. 1). She began her long employment at Fort Monmouth in June 1942, working her way up to chief technical editor with supervisory duties ("Ethel," 1942; "Teacher," 1996). She seemed to be well liked and respected by her colleagues ("Co-Workers," 1951).

In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, Puryear was very active in local politics in her hometown of Long Branch, New Jersey, first tackling the problem

of housing discrimination (e.g., "Race," 1948; Isenberg, 1959) and later helping to integrate a local school ("Teacher," 1996). Her house was firebombed after she moved into a white neighborhood in Long Branch (Chang, 1981). Her son, the only Black child in his class, was classified as mentally retarded because he had a learning disability (Chang, 1981). This experience motivated her to leave her job with the Signal Corps in the early 1960s and become a special education teacher in Lakewood, New Jersey (Chang, 1981; "PTA," 1966). While working full-time as a teacher, she studied part-time at Newark State College and King's College, Union, earning a master's degree in special education ("Teacher," 1996). After her retirement in January 1981, she continued to tutor neighborhood children in her home (Chang, 1981).

Mabel Grammer (née Treadwell, a.k.a. Alston, 1906–2002)

Mabel is remembered today chiefly as the architect of the so-called Brown Baby Plan, an adoption program that placed Afro-German children in U.S. homes in the 1950s and 1960s, but she also worked briefly as a technical communicator for the U.S. Army. Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, she reportedly attended Langston High School in Hot Springs, La Salle Beauty College in Pittsburgh (1931–1932), and North Carolina College in Durham (1933–1934).[14] Licensed in cosmetology, she taught "beauty work" at the Wilkins School of Cosmetology in Cleveland and the Poro School of Cosmetology in Columbus, Ohio (c. 1935–1938). She met her first husband, John C. Alston, in Ohio and moved with him to Washington DC so that he could pursue graduate studies at Howard University. Mabel wrote a beauty column and engaged in other newspaper work for the *Washington Afro-American* from late 1938 until early 1948, but her divorce c. 1945 seems to have disrupted her personal and professional life. She spent some time for "mental observation" in DC's Gallinger Hospital.

Mabel began her federal employment as a Clerk-Typist CAF-3 (Clerical, Administrative, Fiscal, grade 3) in the Office of the Quartermaster General (OQG) in February 1948. She was part of the "Return of the Dead" program that was still dealing with the remains of U.S. military personnel killed in World War II. Although her official job title never changed, her role advanced from basic clerk-typist to acceptance-clerk to change-clerk special cases in the Repatriation

14. These details were self-reported by Mabel on two different employment applications from the late 1940s that are part of her federal civilian personnel file at NARA's National Personnel Record Center in St. Louis. Many sources state that she earned a journalism degree from Ohio State University in the late 1930s, but she did not report attending OSU on her job applications. Nor was OSU archivist Michell L. Drobik (email communication, 23 September 2024) able to find a record of her enrollment or graduation during the relevant years. A copy of Mabel's birth certificate (issued in 1942) gives her birth date as December 16, 1906, while documents in her federal civilian personnel file and her tombstone in Arlington National Cemetery give her birth date as December 23, 1913. The 1910 U.S. Census corroborates the earlier date.

Branch of the Memorial Division.[15] Her duties as a change-clerk illustrate the often-repeated observation that technical communicators work under a variety of job titles. According to the job description for this position, her duties included determining whether requested changes in next-of-kin letters were permissible under regulations; extracting information from next-of-kin letters and writing interment directives; writing special instructions to overseas commands as addenda to disinterment directives; communicating with other OQG offices through memoranda, change-action sheets, and various forms; reviewing administrative decision forms for accuracy and completeness; and keeping thorough records and writing daily reports of activities.

In 1949, Mabel took the information specialist examination and earned the strong civil service rating of "Press GS-9 80.0" (with "GS-9" indicating the General Schedule grade level and corresponding pay range, and "80.0" representing her exam score) under the government's new job classification system. She was also rated "Visual GS-7" and "Motion Pictures GS-8." At the time, the information specialist examination included the following optional subjects: "Articles and speeches, campaigns, motion pictures, opinion analyst, press, publications, public relations, radio, technical editor and writer, and visual" (U.S. Civil, 1949, p. 46). Armed with her information specialist ratings, she advocated for a role change in December 1950 that would have allowed her to leverage her journalism experience, but her efforts were unsuccessful. Despite her qualifications, she remained officially a Clerk-Typist GS-3 (converted from the old system's CAF-3).

In March 1951, Mabel resigned from federal service to accompany her second husband, Oscar Grammer, whom she had married a year earlier, to his new posting in Germany. While living in Mannheim, she gained a deeper understanding of the attitudes and treatment directed toward the children of Black American soldiers and white German women. Mabel mobilized her connections in the American Black press to raise awareness about the children's vulnerability and to find homes for those in need, referring to the effort as the "Brown Baby Plan" (Lemke Muniz de Faria, 2003; Walker, 2023). By the time they returned (a second time) to the United States in the mid-1960s, Mabel and Oscar had adopted twelve children, including a little girl who would become the first Black woman to serve as the U.S. Army's surgeon general and a three-star general (West, 2018).

Mabel is sometimes compared to entertainer Josephine Baker, who adopted a "rainbow tribe" of twelve children (e.g., "Jo Baker Shows the Way," 1959), but Mabel started adopting children at least a year earlier than Baker. Both women challenged prevailing racial norms by creating multiracial families, offering a model of love and inclusion that stood in stark contrast to the widespread discrimination and segregation of the time.

15. The standard biographical sources on Mabel Grammer do not mention her civil service. I was alerted to it by Taylor (1950), where her name is misspelled as Mable Alston Crammer.

Marian Elizabeth Miles (née Marion Foster, a.k.a. Downer, 1900–1982)

Marian worked for the U.S. Army for fifteen years (1950–1966), eventually as a technical writer/editor. However, she is best remembered as the journalist Marian F. Downer, a prominent figure in the Black press of the 1930s and 1940s.

Born in Salisbury, North Carolina, she attended Livingstone College (1929–1931) and Crane Junior College (1934–1935) but did not complete a degree ("Marian," 1982).[16] Around 1925, she married Fred Downer, a seasoned baseball player with the Pittsburgh Keystones. After the Downers moved to Chicago, Fred became a sportswriter for the *Pittsburgh Courier* (by correspondence) and later the *Chicago Defender* (Halper, 2023). Marian, too, became an influential journalist, covering Chicago's social scene and other topics for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Defender*, and *Chicago Bee*, as well as contributing to Fred Downer's national Atlas News and Photo Service. She traveled with actress Marva Louis, the wife of boxer Joe Louis, as a newspaper correspondent and later became Marva's personal secretary ("Noted," 1944; "Marian," 1945). Though primarily a social and cultural journalist, she also reported on baseball (e.g., Downer, 1935).

Beyond reporting, Marian was a publishing executive. She was the founding managing editor of the Chicago office of the *Pittsburgh Courier* and later served as comptroller of the *Chicago Defender* ("Noted," 1944). When Black publishers convened in 1940 to establish the Negro Newspaper Publishers Association, she was one of the few women with a seat at the table ("Newspaper Men," 1940). Widely recognized by readers of historically Black newspapers and respected by colleagues in the Black press, she must be regarded as one of the most important Black women in early 20th-century American journalism ("Noted," 1944).

Following her divorce in late 1947—reported in Black newspapers around the country (e.g., "Chicago," 1948)—Marian remained in Chicago, continuing in newspaper work until September 1948. She then worked as a register clerk at Spiegel before shifting to government employment in 1950. Although she started with the Quartermaster Corps, she soon moved to the Army Medical Service's Meat and Dairy Hygiene School, later known as the Veterinary School, where she advanced through roles from "clerk-stenographer" to "clerk-typist" to "editorial clerk (typing)."

A 1961 performance evaluation in her personnel file describes the final role as that of a full-fledged technical communicator, responsible for writing and editing "texts, papers, and manuals … of a highly technical nature." She was particularly commended for her contributions to research and development projects and her revisions of school texts. The work required not only expertise in written communication and English grammar but also "years of association with veterinary terminology."

16. Some sources indicate that Marian graduated from Shaw University (Halper, 2023) or studied journalism at Northwestern University ("Noted," 1944), but she did not list Shaw or Northwestern on her application for federal employment in 1950.

In 1955, Marian married her second husband, Arthur Miles, also a government worker. In 1966, thanks to their federal retirement benefits, they were both able to retire comfortably to Three Rivers, Michigan, where Marian remained active in church activities and social and political organizations (*Cook County*, 2008; "Marian," 1966; "Marian," 1982).

Herbert Gregory Odom (1915–1977)

The U.S. Navy was the third branch of the military that hired many technical communicators. After serving for more than 20 years in the Navy, Odom worked for seven years as a civilian technical writer at the U.S. Naval Electronics Supply Office in Great Lakes, Illinois (Odom, 1971d). The son of a South Carolina sharecropper, Odom joined the U.S. Navy in 1935 to escape poverty (Odom, 1971c, p. 11). Years later, in a series of articles in the *Pittsburgh New Courier*, he castigated the Navy for its treatment of Black men. After explaining how the Navy began recruiting Southern Black men exclusively for the Messman Branch after the Philippines gained its independence in 1932, he recounted his experience as a messman aboard ships in the late 1930s (Odom, 1971a). Messmen were used as de facto servants to white sailors and even house servants to officers and their wives when the officers were on shore duty (Odom, 1971b). "A logical question is, why would an intelligent young man enlist and re-enlist in the Navy under these conditions?" he wrote. "The simple answer is, we are poor. We were usually the sons of washer women, cooks, maids, laborers, sharecroppers. In the messman branch one seldom met the son of a craftsman and never the son of a professional man" (Odom, 1971b, p. 11).

According to Odom, the Navy began to improve in the 1940s, and he eventually prospered. From 1947 until his retirement from active service in 1958, he was stationed at the U.S. Naval School in Great Lakes, where he was trained and served as an electronics technician ("No Mystery," 1948; Odom, 1971d). This prepared him for his civilian employment with the Navy as a technical writer from 1958 to 1965, after which time he returned to the Naval School and worked on curriculum development for several more years (Odom, 1971d). In the 1970s, he taught electronics at Denmark Technical College in South Carolina, presumably as an adjunct instructor (Milkie, 1976). For the Bicentennial, Odom wrote and published a patriotic poem about the Black man and liberty, expressing in glowing terms how he felt about freedom and his country (Milkie, 1976). Shortly before his death in 1977, he told a reporter, "I wouldn't trade [my career in the Navy] for a Ph.D.!" (Milkie, 1976, p. 31).

Allan Rohan Crite (1910–2007)

Though remembered today chiefly for his fine art, Crite (see Figure 11.2) worked as a technical illustrator at the Boston Naval Yard for more than 30 years. The son of an engineer, Crite showed an early interest in art, and his parents and teachers

supported this interest ("Allan," 2022). He studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. After his graduation during the Depression, he produced paintings for the federal government as part of the Works Progress Administration (Brown, 1980). He moved into civil service employment in the late 1930s, working briefly for the Coast Guard and Geodetic Survey before beginning his long-term affiliation with the Boston Navy Yard (also known as the Charlestown Naval Shipyard) ("Allan," 2022). At first, he worked as a draftsman in the engineering sense, but the engineers were soon coming to him to produce perspective drawings of ideas for new technologies (Brown, 1980, p. 10). He illustrated propulsion systems for ships so that the shipbuilders could visualize them ("Allan," 2022).

Although Crite was laid off by the Navy three times between 1941 and 1974, including right after World War II during a massive reduction in force, these periods of separation were more like sabbaticals than unemployment (Brown, 1980; "Allan," 2022). During one of these periods, he was hired by the Rambusch Decorating Company of New York to create murals and other artwork for churches; he had already been making a name for himself as a liturgical artist (Brown, 1980, pp. 10, 49; Dinneen, 1944). Today his artwork can be found not only in churches, but also in museums such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Boston Athenæum. The city of Boston named a park after Crite ("Allan," 2022).

Located at the end of the chapter, Appendix A identifies other Black technical communicators who worked in government before 1970.

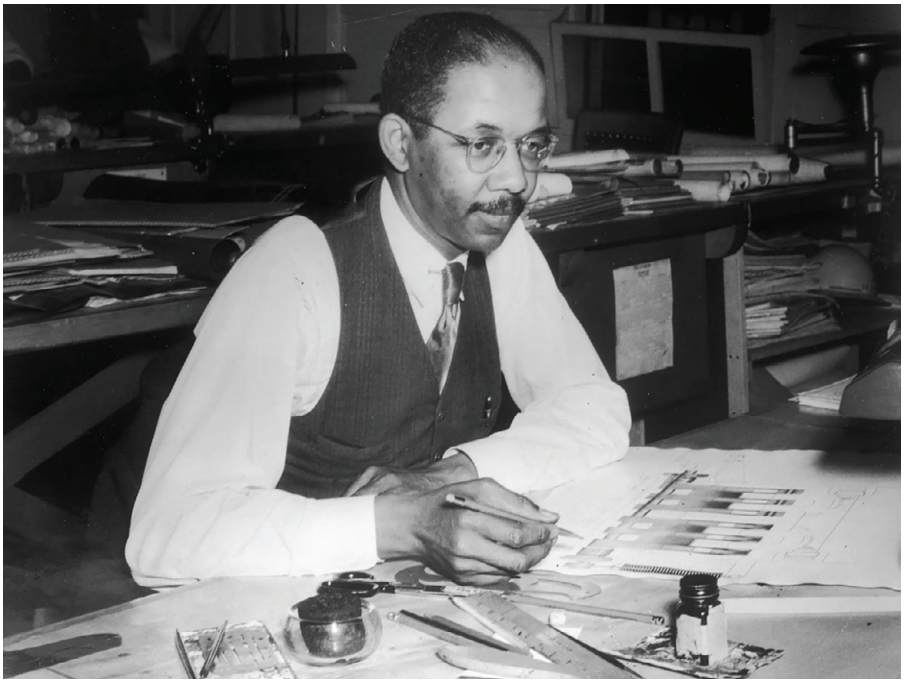

Figure 11.2. Photo of Allen Rohan Crite. (Photo is in the public domain.)

Employed in Industry

Rufus Paul Turner (1907–1982)

n the 1920s and 1930s, Turner earned a place in history by starting a radio station in Washington DC, reportedly the first in the United States owned and operated by a Black person, and by inventing a radio small enough to pass through the eye of a needle ("First," 1926; "Builds," 1934). Turner was also a prolific technical writer, publishing thousands of articles in trade magazines and journals as well as dozens of books on technical subjects ranging from using an oscilloscope to understanding the metric system to mastering calculus (Page & Roh, 1985). He held many jobs in industry from the 1930s to the 1960s. For example, he was a research engineer for Waltham Watch Company and Aerovox Corporation and an applications engineer for Sylvania Electric Products ("Memorandum," 1947). According to the 1950 U.S. Census, he was an electrical engineer for an aircraft company (probably Hughes or Douglas; he worked for both at different times).

As managing editor of *Radio* magazine, he read authors' manuscripts ("Turner's special job is to watch out for those 'boners' unlikely to be caught by non-technical proofreaders"), checked galley proofs, and helped design the page layouts ("He Crashed," 1938). He also worked as a technical editor in the electronics division of the National Cash Register Company and for Litton Industries (Turner, 1964). Based on his experience as a researcher, writer, and editor, he authored three technical communication textbooks in the 1960s: *Grammar Review for Technical Writers* (1964), *Technical Writer's and Editor's Stylebook* (1964), and *Technical Report Writing* (1965). He was a member of STC when it was called the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers (STWP) ("News," 1967), and his textbooks were advertised and reviewed in STWP's journal (e.g., Untitled, 1964; Galasso, 1965).

One of the most remarkable facts about Turner is that he became an English literature professor late in his life. He earned a BA in English from the Los Angeles State College of Applied Arts and Sciences (now California State University–Los Angeles) in 1958, an MA from the University of Southern California in 1960, and a PhD from USC in 1966 (Page & Roh, 1985). His dissertation was a study of the life and career of 18th-century British author Charlotte Turner Smith. From 1961 to 1972, he was employed by his BA alma mater, teaching technical writing as well as other English courses.[17] In an interview with the *Los Angeles Sentinel* in 1965, Turner must have raised some eyebrows when he advised aspiring scientists to earn an undergraduate degree in liberal arts before pursuing a degree in engineering or one of the sciences. He said they should study

17. Turner made his first appearance in the college catalog in 1961–1962 as a part-time faculty member and his last appearance in 1971–1972 as a full-time faculty member. He became a full-time assistant professor in 1963 and was promoted to associate professor in 1967 ("News," 1967).

literature, for example, to become better communicators, to sensitize themselves to the social and human consequences of scientific experimentation, and to discover "the joys of living" ("Prof Says," 1965).

Stanley Thomas Edmonds (1927–1993)

Edmonds was a technical writer at Hughes Aircraft in the 1960s, and he may have stayed with that company until the early 1980s. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, he and his mother must have moved to New York in the early 1940s because in 1945 he graduated from Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem ("Stanley," 1993). I have found no evidence that he earned a college degree, but he did serve in the Army Air Force in the mid-1940s, and by 1950, according to the U.S. Census, he was married, had a son, and was working as a repairman for the New York telephone company. He apparently became a "broadcasting engineer" at some point during his eight years with the phone company (Holder, 1962). After brief periods of employment as a technical writer with TechLit Services in New York and a project engineer with the McLaughlin Research Group, he moved his family to Southern California and managed a four-person team of technical writers at Hughes Aircraft (Holder, 1962; Institute, 1962). A 1962 article in the *Pittsburgh Courier* touted him as "among a growing number of young Negroes moving to the forefront of their profession" because "industry is beginning to hire 'qualified' persons regardless of racial background" (Holder, 1962, p. 5). In the 1970s, Edmonds incorporated two businesses: Ledger Demand Systems in 1975 and Publication Engineering, Inc., in 1977 ("Legal Notice," 1975, 1977).

Edmonds's professional status as a Hughes Aircraft "engineering writer" did not ensure that he and his family would be treated with respect.[18] When the Edmonds family hosted an Italian exchange student in 1966, the *Anaheim Bulletin* published a story about the intercultural exchange, but the article undercuts Edmonds's status in several ways. For example, the reporter comments wryly, "Tony also discovered that many American dads hold down two jobs to provide the standard of living envied all over the world" ("Fried Chicken," 1966, p. 4). Edmonds was apparently working evenings as a "financial counselor." The typical technical writer during this period did not have to work two jobs to support a family, especially a technical writer in private industry with supervisory duties (see Table 11.4). I don't know why Edmonds was doing so; but the reporter emphasizes this fact ironically. There is also a photograph of the Edmonds family and Tony at the dinner table, but the newspaper panders to stereotypes (both in the photo's caption and the article's headline) by suggesting that Tony does not need spaghetti when he has fried chicken.

18. I believe Edmonds was the unnamed technical writer in the 1962 Buena Park vignette (see the "Housing Discrimination" section below). The neighbors would not allow their children to play with his son.

Table 11.4. Salary Ranges of Technical Writers in Private Industry and Government in 1965[a]

Private Industry		
Level of Experience	**Salary Range in 1965**	**Equivalent in 2024[b]**
Inexperienced	$5,000–$7,000	$49,769–$69,677
Moderately Experienced	$7,000–$10,000	$69,677–$99,538
Highly Experienced	$11,000–$13,000	$109,492–$129,399
With Supervisor Duties	up to $17,000	up to $169,215
Government		
Level of Experience	**Salary Range in 1965**	**Equivalent in 2024**
Inexperienced	$5,000–$6,050	$49,769–$60,220
One Year of Experience	$6,050–$7,220	$60,220–$71,866
Two Years of Experience	$7,220–$8,650	$71,866–$86,100
Three Years of Experience	$8,650–$10,250	$86,100–$102,026

[a] *Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook (U.S. Bureau, 1966, p. 236)*
[b] *The 2024 equivalents come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI Inflation Calculator (U.S. Bureau, n.d.). I compared dollar amounts in July 1965 and July 2024.*

James Harmon Lyons (1919–1981)

Lyons worked as a technical communicator in Buffalo, New York, in the 1950s. He graduated from Buffalo Technical High School in 1937, attended West Virginia State College for at least two years, and finished an engineering degree at the University of Buffalo at some point ("James," 1981; "James," 2024). After his military service during World War II, he worked at Westinghouse for a few years, then at Bell Aircraft Company for more than a decade (from 1949 into the 1960s), first as a technical illustrator and later as a technical writer ("James," 1981). He was reportedly one of only three Black people employed by the company at the time ("James," 2024).

From a young age, Lyons was a successful musician, winning awards for his singing in high school, performing in musical shows in the military, and moonlighting as an entertainer in later years ("Four," 1937). He became the Buffalo area's first Black disc jockey, eventually hosting his own show, "The Lyons Den" ("James," 1981). In 1965, he left radio work to start a construction company with his brother; later, he worked as a building inspector for the city ("Dream," 1965).

Although he is remembered today chiefly as a radio personality in the Buffalo area, he should also be remembered as an innovative entrepreneur who used his communication skills to promote the local economic interests of Black people.

In the late 1950s, Lyons co-founded the Niagara Negro Sales Service (NNSS), which provided information and assistance to businesses seeking to enter the "multi-million-dollar Negro market" in the Buffalo area (Cannon, 1958, p. 6). As

part of its effort, the NNSS published the *1958–1959 Negro Directory of the Niagara Frontier*, which included the names and addresses of Black people of various occupations. This resource suggests that Black technical communicators were not as common as other Black professionals in the 1950s. For example, the directory lists eight attorneys, thirteen physicians, and fourteen engineers in the city of Buffalo. By contrast, it lists only one technical illustrator and three technical writers, in addition to Lyons himself (Cannon, 1958). The technical illustrator may be the same **Harold Hopkins (1924–1988)** who was murdered three decades later in Charlotte, North Carolina. That man was a native of Lockport, New York, a World War II veteran, and a retired IBM employee (Minter, 1988). The three technical writers were **Samuel Mitchell (probably 1930–1966)**, **Roosevelt Cutter (1923–2014)**, and **Robert Charles Warburton (1926–1979)** ("Robert," 1979; "Roosevelt," 2007). I do not know where Mitchell and Cutter worked in the Buffalo area, but Warburton was one of Lyons' co-workers at Bell Aircraft ("Robert," 1979).

Sperry-Rand's UNIVAC Division

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the UNIVAC Division of Sperry-Rand in St. Paul, Minnesota, employed several Black technical communicators. It was such an unusual situation that a 1960 article in the *Minneapolis Spokesman* called attention to the number of "Negroes" employed in "important jobs" at UNIVAC: an engineer, an application analyst, and five technical communicators ("UNIVAC," 1960). Remington Rand purchased the Philadelphia-based Eckert–Mauchly Computer Corporation (including the UNIVAC computer) in 1950 and the St. Paul-based Engineering Research Associates in 1952. After Sperry Corporation purchased Remington Rand in 1955, these earlier acquisitions became part of the Remington Rand UNIVAC Division of Sperry-Rand ("Ground," 1955). The following profiles of the technical communicators at UNIVAC comprise a site-specific cohort in an unusual pre-1960 concentration of Black technical communicators that suggests the work of a network with hiring influence, such as the Urban League. The St. Paul Urban League may have been referring to these technical communicators as well as other white-collar workers when it claimed credit for "placement of scientific, clerical, and skilled workers" in 1955 ("Historical," 1960, p. 4B).

Beverly Young (a.k.a. Thompson, 1934–1987)

Beverly began her employment with UNIVAC as a technical editor in the 1950s. One source identified her as a graduate of Louisiana State University, another of Dillard University; the latter is probably correct because Beverly had family ties to New Orleans (DeMille, 1960; Klobuchar, 1987). After graduation, she may have moved to St. Paul specifically for the job with Remington Rand. A 1960 photograph published in the *St. Paul Recorder* shows her conferring with two other (white) editors in her workplace (Untitled, 1960). She left UNIVAC in 1963 to work for Control Data Corporation in Minneapolis, where she supervised a

group of people working on Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO), one of the first computer-facilitated instruction platforms (Klobuchar, 1987). She was still employed by Control Data in 1987 when she met with a tragic, violent death. In an argument between husband and wife about their son, Beverly was run over by her husband's car, and her body was dragged for nearly a mile (Hotakainen, 1987). The newspapers covered the police investigation, trial, and subsequent lawsuits.

Wilbur Vernon Kennedy (1928–2015)

Kennedy was employed by UNIVAC as a technical writer during the same period as Young. He, too, had family ties to Louisiana. In the late 1940s, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in math from Southern University in Baton Rouge ("UNIVAC," 1960). The 1950 U.S. Census for New Orleans identified him as a math teacher in a public school; at some point, he also taught mathematics at a high school in Lake Providence, LA ("Share," 1968). It is not clear when and why he travelled north to work at UNIVAC, but he did not stay in Minnesota for long. In July 1964, he was hired by Boeing to work at the Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans. He made news when he received half of a $5,000 award for co-suggesting that a change-record page be added to automatic test procedures ("Share," 1968). His obituary offers no biographical details about him except for his age and a list of relatives, but it does provide a photograph ("Wilbur," 2015).

Cecil Taylor Lewis (1907–1997)

Cecil and his brother Joseph both worked as technical writers at UNIVAC ("UNIVAC," 1960). A native of Pittsburgh, Cecil earned his bachelor's degree in education in 1930 and taught for a few years in one or more public schools on the East Coast (Untitled, 1937). For a number of years, he worked in the printing department at Hampton Institute, Virginia (Charles Allen, personal communication, 27 July 2023). For his master's degree (1943) at Hampton, he wrote a thesis about alumni programs at historically Black colleges; he was identified as an Assistant Professor of English at the time of his graduation ("Master," 1943). After teaching English at Tennessee State University for several years, he joined the staff at UNIVAC in the 1950s, and he was still working for UNIVAC in 1972 ("Bad," 1972).

Joseph Linwood Lewis (1929–2022)

Joseph was admitted to Hampton Institute in 1948 to study architectural engineering (Charles Allen, personal communication, 27 July 2023). As part of an exchange program to foster interracial understanding, he transferred to Denison University in Ohio for at least one semester in 1950 ("Hampton," 1950). He must have joined the Air Force before he completed a degree at Hampton. He was stationed as a radar technician at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas, when he married in 1952 ("Cash-Lewis," 1952). He spent time in Japan before

leaving the service, and he joined the UNIVAC staff as a technical writer in the mid-1950s (Jordan, 1956; "Social," 1953). A 1958 newspaper article reported the tragic death of his infant son from accidental strangulation; in the article, Cecil is explicitly identified as the boy's uncle ("Nine," 1958).

Ed Rose was also identified in the 1960 article as a Black person working as a technical writer at UNIVAC. He apparently graduated from the University of Colorado ("UNIVAC," 1960), but I have not been able to identify him further.

Orville Wimberley Fraction (1929–1978)

Not mentioned in the 1960 article, Fraction was working as a technical illustrator for UNIVAC when a newspaper announced his engagement in 1957 ("Engagement," 1957). A star football player at Minneapolis's Central High School in the 1940s, Fraction went into the printing business after graduation (Bryne, 1946; "Engagement," 1957). He is identified as a printer in the 1950 U.S. Census. There is no evidence that he attended college or obtained a college degree, although it is possible he did. In either case, his print-shop experience may have prepared him for the position of technical illustrator at UNIVAC.

Barbara Sybil Cyrus, née Mallory (1917–2011)

Barbara was a technical publications editor at Minneapolis Honeywell Regulator Company in the mid-1960s. Later, she worked at Control Data and Investors Diversified Services (IDS). Her father, the son of a Mississippi sharecropper, had moved north to find work in the 1910s, and he was working as a hotel waiter in Minneapolis when Barbara was a child (Monaghan, 1985). One of the few Black families living so far south in Minneapolis, the Mallories faced difficult challenges: "[Neighbors] circulated a petition to have them removed. That didn't work. They threw burning rags on the porch, and they chased the Mallory children home from school" (Monaghan, 1985, p. 3).

In the late 1930s, Barbara transferred back and forth between the University of Minnesota and Spelman College in Georgia, eventually earning an associate's degree from the former school (Brady, 2007, p. 29). She recalled her sense of isolation at UM, often being the only Black person in her classes and largely being ignored by other students, even her former high school classmates attending the same university (Carew, 2006). World War II created unprecedented employment opportunities for Black people in Minneapolis, and both Barbara and her sister were hired to operate machinery at the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant. She told a reporter that "it was the first time I really felt like an American" rather than "a black person in America" (Monaghan, 1985, p. 3). After she married in 1944, she moved with her military husband to Seattle and was put in charge of an ordnance library ("Barbara," 1944; Roberts, 1997). She recalled how important she felt in this position (Roberts, 1997).

After returning to Minneapolis, Barbara worked in public and university libraries in the late 1940s and the 1950s ("Minneapolis," 2011). She moved into

technical communication in the 1960s, first as a technical editor of military manuals at Honeywell and later as a technical writer at Control Data ("Technical," 1964; Von Sternberg, 2011). From the 1970s until her retirement, she was the editor of an in-house magazine at IDS (Peterson, 2003). During these decades, she also wrote for local newspapers, especially the *Minneapolis Spokesman*—for example, covering the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago ("Barbara," 2017). Her obituary in the *Star Tribune* described her as a "Minneapolis civil rights pioneer" (Von Sternberg, 2011).

Frank Neptune Jones (1929–2007)

In the mid-1960s, a wire story about Jones appeared in several historically Black newspapers, including the *New York Amsterdam News* and the *Chicago Defender* (e.g., "Radar," 1965). The story noted that Frank was working for Radio Corporation of America (RCA) as an editor, with duties that included revising engineers' reports, editing technical manuals, and corresponding with customers about company products ("Radar," 1965). In other words, he was performing some of the typical job duties of technical editors and writers in the 1960s. However, his job was national news in historically Black newspapers because the job was held by a Black man.

Frank's father worked for over 30 years (1921–1954) as a porter and elevator operator in the Littlefield Building in Austin, Texas ("Rest Earned," 1954). He told a reporter covering his retirement in 1954 that he was proud of the fact that he had put his three sons through Huston-Tillotson College. All of them were successfully employed in 1954. His eldest son, Frank, had graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1951, and, at the time of the interview, he was working as a civilian radar instructor in the Signal Corps School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey ("Rest Earned," 1954; "Frank," 2007). Frank must have received training relevant to radar technology during or after his college education, because the job at Fort Monmouth would have required more than courses in advanced mathematics.

In the 1950s and 1960s, RCA was publicly committed to hiring Black people, including as technical writers and editors ("R.C.A.," 1954). In fact, RCA would become one of the first eight U.S. companies to sign a Plan-for-Progress pledge to improve their EEO practices at the invitation of the Kennedy-Johnson administration (Braestrup, 1961). RCA's 1959 hiring of Jones aligned with both the company's public commitments and his evident qualifications. He began work in the company's Harrison, New Jersey, plant under the title "Associate Engineer for Product Development," though his responsibilities were those of a technical editor ("Radar," 1965). In the 1940s through the 1960s, it was not uncommon for technical writers and editors in industry to work under an engineer job title even when they did not have a degree in engineering. One of the projects he contributed to was the annual editions of the *RCA Receiving Tube Manual*, a comprehensive reference source for professionals and amateurs on vacuum tubes used in electronic equipment ("Radar,"

1965). Frank remained in publications throughout his career and eventually became Manager of Engineering Publications (RCA, 1980).

Located at the end of the chapter, Appendix B identifies other Black technical communicators who worked in industry before 1970.

Housing Discrimination

The profiles above offer a glimpse into the lives and work of Black technical communicators, but the ability to do that work—particularly in the industrial and government centers where such jobs were concentrated—depended on finding suitable housing. In my archival research, housing discrimination emerged repeatedly as a formidable racialized barrier. It was the only form of racial discrimination for which I found multiple, substantial examples involving technical communicators—enough to support an antenarrative bet that it affected their work.

Like other Black Americans in mid-20th-century America, Black technical communicators often faced significant challenges in obtaining safe, affordable housing near their places of employment due to discrimination by real estate agencies, banks, landlords, and homeowners. These experiences reflect the broader social, psychological, and economic barriers that shaped Black workers' lives and careers (Randol, 1972). After recounting examples of housing discrimination involving technical communicators, I speculate on its consequences for various aspects of work—such as commuting, health and absenteeism, productivity and efficiency, career progression, and professionalization—because, as research shows, "discrimination in one domain or at one point in time may have consequences for a broader range of outcomes" (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 199). This form of structural discrimination is referred to as "accumulated disadvantage."

In testimony before Congress, a staff member of the organization Freedom of Residence reported that, from 1966 to 1969, no fewer than 43 employees of McDonnell-Douglas Corporation in St. Louis faced housing discrimination. The testimony alleged that the company had two housing lists for new employees: a list for Black employees of housing available in Black areas of the city and a very different list for white employees—an allegation that the company denied. One of the cited examples involved a newly hired technical illustrator:

> Until he found suitable housing in mid-September 1969, almost six months later, he stayed at the YMCA. McDonnell-Douglas Corporation's Housing Department provided him with a lengthy list of rental housing located both in the city and the county. He contacted many of the apartment complexes on the list, and also followed up on newspaper advertisements. Place after place advised him there was no vacancy. On several occasions, he shared this with McDonnell-Douglas Corporation's Housing Department, asking them for assistance. Repeatedly he was told that all

> they could do for him is give him an updated list and suggested that he keep on trying. Finally, early in September 1969, in utter despair, he went door to door, asking if an apartment is available, and found an apartment that was vacant and that he liked. When he called the Real Estate Company who was leading this unit, he was told the apartment was rented. A white checker from the Freedom of Residence office then phoned the Real Estate company and was told the apartment was available. The following morning the McDonnell-Douglas Corporation employee personally went to the Real Estate office to inquire about the apartment and again was told the apartment was rented. Two hours later another white checker from Freedom of Residence was told this same apartment was still available. (U.S. Congress, 1970, p. 7757)

The technical illustrator was able to rent the apartment after a Freedom of Residence representative told the real estate company about their investigation and indicated that "their client" intended to file a lawsuit.

In a 1954 newspaper report, a "silk screen worker and technical writer" named Neville Baron Lake (1913–1963) recounted his experience in a white neighborhood in St. Albans, New York ("Brotherhood," 1954). After moving into the neighborhood with his wife and three children, most of his neighbors put up "For Sale" signs in their yards. Lake sent his neighbors a letter commending them for their peaceful action; he pointed out that a family like his in another state might have been "beaten, bombed, or perhaps murdered." He invited remaining neighbors to keep their houses and make the neighborhood "a shining example of racial amity" ("Brotherhood," 1954, p. 18). In response to his letter, some neighbors put up "Not for Sale" signs in their yards. Lake did not persuade all his neighbors to stay, but he developed positive relationships with those who did.

Writing in 1962 for the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a columnist shared a "vignette" with his readers (Robertson, 1962). He met a grandmother from Buena Park, California, in a bus station. Her son had been hired as a technical writer at Hughes Aircraft in Fullerton and had moved his family from the East Coast to the small California town, where, at the time, only one other Black family lived. The son in question was almost certainly Stanley T. Edmonds, profiled earlier, who had relocated to Buena Park with his mother and two children. His son would have been no older than twelve at the time—matching the likely age of the grandson in the story. The grandmother explained that the family didn't mind when many townspeople ignored them on the street. "What hurt," she said, "was when the parents saw their children playing with my grandson and called them home, refusing to let them play with him." The children, however, disobeyed their parents secretly. One boy "snuck into the backyard of our house and called my grandson." He gave him a map showing how to get to a play area outside of the housing development. Her grandson went there the next day and played with the children all day, as he did for many days, all summer long.

When the school year began, they continued to play together after school, but they separated on the way home each night so their parents wouldn't know.

Placing a classified ad for housing in a newspaper was one strategy for cutting through the time-consuming and emotion-draining rejections based on race. In 1967, for example, a technical writer placed the following ad in the "Wanted to Rent" section of the *Rock Island (Illinois) Argus*: "COLORED—Government technical writer needs apartment or nice room. Ph. 786-4411. Ext. 518 or leave message" ("Wanted," 1967, p. 20). The Rock Island Arsenal was a major government employer of technical communicators, so the technical writer who placed the ad may have been working at the arsenal. The ad is interesting for several reasons. First, it does not mention gender. The person who placed the ad may have assumed that "man" was implied by "technical writer." Second, the word "colored" is positioned at the beginning of the sentence in all capital letters. The technical writer clearly wanted to emphasize race, presumably their own racial identity rather than that of a landlord. Third, the term "colored" is used instead of "Negro" at a time when the latter had largely replaced the former. This choice of terms probably spoke to some readers differently than others, keeping away landlords who would not rent to a Black person while inviting contact from those who would.

After moving into white neighborhoods, Ethel Puryear and Barbara Cyrus (profiled earlier) and Lydie Allen and Bertha Bragg (listed in Appendix A) encountered hostile and, in some cases, violent responses. Arsonists targeted the homes of both the Puryear and Cyrus families in New Jersey and Minnesota, respectively. In Washington DC, someone painted "Remember Little Rock—K. K. K." on the sidewalk in front of Allen's house ("Farce," 1958). She and her husband Ervin had three small children at the time. As reported nationally in *Jet* magazine, Bragg returned home from an Elks convention in Chicago to find her furniture on the sidewalk in front of her DC apartment building (Burley, 1954).

The relationship between housing discrimination and health and wealth in Black communities has been well documented (e.g., Lipsitz, 2024), but while its impact on work has been acknowledged (e.g., Desmond & Gershenson, 2016), it remains less explored. The types of housing discrimination illustrated in the preceding examples may have impacted technical communicators' work in several ways:

- Increased commuting distances, leading to longer workdays and reduced personal time;
- Health issues resulting in absences and diminished work continuity;
- Worry and distractions, compromising productivity and efficiency;
- Location and job changes, disrupting career progression; and
- Depletion of time and energy necessary for networking, continuing education, and other professional development activities.

These outcomes would have been compounded by other forms of discrimination, including employment (hiring, raises, promotions), workplace (treatment by co-workers, access to mentorship, recognition of contributions), education,

healthcare, and financial services. Just as localized instances of fraud, incompetence, and confusion in the post-World War II technical writing industry allegedly cost the United States billions of dollars (Bishop, 1964), the cumulative effects of housing discrimination would have resulted in significant losses for not only the individuals involved but also their employers and the broader American economy. This pattern illustrates the trap of the zero-sum paradigm, where one group's progress is wrongly perceived as a threat to others, reinforcing discrimination and inequality. It also underscores the importance of adopting the "solidarity dividend" mindset, where addressing inequality collectively leads to shared benefits for all (McGhee, 2021).

Conclusion

In this reclamation project, I have begun the process of compiling a registry of Black people who worked as technical communicators in mid-20th century America, merely scratching the surface of this important historical record. The number of Black technical communicators from the 1940s through the 1960s was far greater than their representation in STC and IEEE historical documents and other traditional scholarly sources might lead people to believe. While mid-20th-century technical writers, editors, and illustrators were increasing in number and beginning to form a unified professional identity as technical communicators, many Black technical communicators were actively present in workplaces. Their contributions were crucial to the growth, significance, and professionalism of technical communication as a community of practice.

In addition to providing their names, my project documents where and when they worked, how long they lived, where they received their educations, and other biographical and professional details about them. This information not only individualizes them as people with unique backgrounds and lived experiences, but it also provides concrete evidence of their presence in our profession and lays the groundwork for more fully assessing their individual and collective contributions.

The few stories of technical communicators in this study cannot support dependable generalizations, nor coalescence into a broader, coherent narrative. Through abduction rather than induction, however, they can be used to form hypotheses or "bets" (Boje, 2001). In line with this antenarrative approach, I will propose several hypotheses based on the data I have collected.

First, Black technical communicators contributed substantially to the emerging profession of technical communication, but their contributions have been largely overlooked and unacknowledged in existing narratives of the profession's history. Their presence and contributions were sometimes documented in contemporaneous sources, such as magazines like *Ebony* and *Jet* and historically Black newspapers, but those sources have not informed historical scholarship in technical communication. A student looking through STC and IEEE publications from the 1950s and 1960s will see so few Black people in photographs that it might lead them to believe that Black technical communicators were rare in

those decades. Although they may have been few in number when compared to white technical communicators, they were not rare.

Second, like other Black people in mid-20th-century America, Black technical communicators in mid-20th-century America had to overcome formidable challenges and barriers in their personal and professional lives, obstacles that their white colleagues did not face, yet they still made significant professional contributions and achievements. They had to contend with unfair hiring practices; underrepresentation and invisibility (or negative visibility) in the workplace; feelings of isolation rather than community; undercutting of their value and status in many domains, including the white media; and discrimination in many facets of life, from the housing market to daily transportation to schools for their children. I would wager that their struggles with systemic racism were reflected in their contributions to the emerging profession and in the technical communication they produced and that their lived experiences enriched the practice of technical communication by broadening its perspective.

Third, informal networks and communities of Black technical communicators supported one another professionally and socially. Although solitary Black technical communicators might feel isolated in some workplaces, groups of technical communicators or groups of Black employees in other workplaces may have banded together and helped one another. The concentration of Black technical communicators at UNIVAC and TACOM suggests networks with hiring influence (e.g., a local affiliate of the Urban League in the case of UNIVAC). They may not have found community with other Black technical communicators in professional organizations such as STC and IEEE, but they may have interacted in political, religious, and social organizations, particularly in big cities. For example, several technical communicators at TACOM (see Appendix A) were officers in the same political organizations and co-owners of businesses.

Finally, awareness of historical Black technical communicators and their stories can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the profession's history, revising the traditional genealogy of the profession to include many Black technical communicators as first-generation professional technical communicators. Reclaiming their legacy may further affirm Black voices by strengthening their professional identities and shared sense of ownership in the profession. The challenges that historical Black technical communicators faced and overcame can inspire all technical communicators to pursue their professional goals with tenacity.

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Note

I do not formally cite the databases listed below, even though I made extensive use of them. When necessary, I have written "According to his draft registration card" or "According to the 1950 US Census."

- Archive.org
- Ancestry.com
- Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010
- Find a Grave, https://www.findagrave.com
- Google Books
- Newspapers.com
- Proquest Historical Newspapers
- Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007
- Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014
- United States Federal Censuses, especially the 1950 Census
- World War II Draft Registration Cards

Because database annotations—such as Newspapers.com, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and so on—have been removed from the entries, these citations now refer to the original newspaper issues rather than their database digitizations.

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Appendix A. Other Technical Communicators Employed in Government

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Lydie Foster Allen (née Coleman, 1917–1974)	Editorial Clerk[a]	Unknown ("National Defense")	Washington, DC	1950 [b]	See the photo of her in "Three" (1935); graduated from Virginia Union University circa 1940 ("Allen," 1974); was living in DC during the 1950 census; experienced housing discrimination ("Farce," 1958)
Herbert Esau Augustus (1919–1973)	Technical Publications Writer	Army Chemical Center	Harford County, MD	1956	Earned a BS from Morgan State College (1942) and an MA from Ohio State University (1947); published an article in *Technical Writing Review* (Augustus, 1956)
Charles Alfred Bankhead (1924–2000)	Illustrator	Federal Civil Defense Administration's Civil Defense Staff College	Olney, MD	1952	Previously worked as an illustrator for the Army and CIA; patented several inventions; see the workplace photo of him in Taylor (1952)
Oscar Lee Banks (1929–1993)	Visual Information Specialist	Department of Agriculture's Forest Service	Milwaukee, WI	1950s and 1960s	May have designed the visual on the cover of Horn (1954); graduated with a BFA from the University of Illinois (1957); see U.S. Department (1968) for a workplace photo
Earl Elmer Bass (1917–2000)	Technical Manuals Editor	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1960s	Worked as a reporter for the *Nashville Globe* in the 1940s; attended every World Series from 1956 to at least 1968 (Neuman, 1968)
Joseph Bradford (1907–1991)	Information Specialist	Department of Agriculture	Washington, DC	1960s	Began his career in the early 1940s with the Alabama Agricultural Extension Service; earned a PhD in 1962; see U.S. Department (1965) for workplace photos of Bradford, S. Briscoe, and Green

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Bertha May Bragg (née Martin, 1913–1989)	Editorial Clerk	Pentagon	Washington, DC	1954	Performed as a soprano in the National Negro Opera Company; held leadership positions in the Prince Hall Masons and the Daughters of the Elks ("Elks," 1954); evicted from her DC apartment (Burley, 1954, p. 47); retired from the Army Military Personnel Center in 1982 (Council, 1982)
Nathaniel Irving Briscoe (nicknamed "Bris," 1928–1999)	Illustrator	Department of the Navy	Washington, DC	1950s–1980s	Described as a "scientific illustrator" in one source; founded the Woodridge Warriors Youth Organization, Washington DC, in 1963 ("Brotherhood," 1957; Woodridge, 2019)
Sherman Briscoe (1908–1979)	Information Specialist	Department of Agriculture	Washington, DC	1941–1968	Became the executive director of the National Newspaper Publishers Association in 1970 (Hoopes, 1977, pp. 58–59; "Sherman," 1979)
Margaret Ophelia Brooks (a.k.a. Johnson, 1915–1993)	Editorial Clerk	Department of the Army	Washington, DC	1950	Born in Amory, Mississippi; lived in DC during the 1950 census, which identifies her employer anachronistically as "War Department"
Edward Milton Broom (1926–2002)	Technical Illustrator	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1951–1981	Founded a greeting card company, Broom Designs, that marketed exclusively to African Americans (May, 2002; Brogdon, 2024)
Austin Thomas Brown (1932–2019)	Supervisor, Technical Publications Group	Naval Ordnance Laboratory, later the Naval Surface Weapons Center	White Oak, MD	1960s–1990s	Joined STC in 1967; served as chairman of STC's Washington, DC chapter (1971–1972) and national president of STC (1988–1989) (Lockley, 2021)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Warren Wesley Buck (1915–1988)	Engineering draftsman; scientific illustrator	Weather Bureau, Department of Commerce, later NOAA	Washington, DC	1942–1970s	Educated at Lincoln University in Missouri; father of the well-known physicist by the same name (Buck, 2021, pp. 7–9)
Augustus Luther Budd (1924–1978)	Illustrator	"U.S. Government"	Unknown	1956–1957	Described as a "draftsman" in one source and an "illustrator" in another ("Brotherhood," 1957)
Nathaniel Cannon (1923–1985)	Technical Illustrator	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1950s–1980s	Served as Chief of TACOM's Illustration Branch in the 1960s and 1970s (May, 1985)
Bernice Lucille Carroll (née Emmons, a.k.a. Davis, 1915–2001)	Illustrator	Bureau of Reclamation	Billings, MT	1947–1952	Attended Ohio State University, but graduated from Virginia State, majoring in art; was the first Black certified public school teacher in Billings, MT ("Bureau," 1952; "Bernice," 2001)
Germaine Alvon Culver (1909–1984)	Editorial Clerk	Unknown ("Federal Government")	Baltimore? Washington, DC?	1950	Began his federal service as a messenger with the National Park Service in 1933; was living in Baltimore during the 1950 census ("Culver," 1984)
Richard William Dempsey (1909–1987)	Illustrator	General Services Administration	Washington, DC	1950–1974	Created statistical visuals and other illustrations for the GSA ("GSA," 1951); recognized for his fine art, represented in the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Gallery of Art
Leatrice Joyce Dowd (née Matthews, 1923–1987)	Technical Writer-Editor	Army Troop Support Command	St. Louis, MO	1960s – 1980s (?)	Elected Mayor of Pagedale, MO, in 1986; died while in office ("Pagedale," 1979: "Leatrice," 1987)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Andrew Rapp Edelen (1925–2002)	Statistical Draftsman; Visual Information Specialist	(1) U.S. Post Office Department; (2) Industrial College of the Armed Forces; (3) Army Armament Materiel Readiness Command	Washington, DC; Rock Island, IL	1940s–1980	Began his federal service as a messenger at 16; prepared graphs and charts for postal officials; designed the red, white, and blue color scheme for postal vehicles and mailboxes; designed exhibits and memorials for the Army ("Exhibits," 1980)
Ana Adeline Edmonds (née Aiken, 1921–2019)	Illustrator	Navy Hydrographic Office	Suitland, MD	1954	Served as a WAC during WWII ("Disillusioned," 1945); graduated from Letcher Art Center in Washington, DC ("Brotherhood," 1957)
Donald Anderson Edwards (1905–1999)	Technical Editor	Signal Corps' Publication Agency, Fort Monmouth	Monmouth County, NJ	circa 1943	See the photo of him in "The Better" (1945); earned a PhD in 1953; enjoyed a long career as a physics professor (Sammons, 1990, p. 82)
Charles William Enoch (a.k.a. Agbo, 1926–1994)	Technical Illustrator; Writer and Editor	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1955–mid 1980s	Served as Deputy Minister of Information for the Republic of New Afrika in the late 1960s ("Charles," 1994; Karolczyk, 2014, p. 187)
Ella Geralldine Green (née Jones, b. 1927)	Writer-Editor	Department of Agriculture	Washington, DC	1960s	Joined the USDA as a clerk-typist in 1946; promoted to Writer-Editor ("USDA," 1963); later worked for the Women's Bureau
James Archie Hargraves (1916–2002)	Junior Editor-Writer	Office of Price Administration	Washington, DC	1941–1942	Earned a doctorate in religion at Chicago Theological Seminary (1968); served as president of Shaw University (1971–1976) (Simmons, 2002; "Straws," 1941)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Lucius Herbert Henegan (1901–1979)	Information Specialist	Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration	Washington, DC	1942–1954	Engaged in public relations writing, specialized journalism, and technical communication; moved to the USIA in the 1950s (Waldrop, 1958)
Richard Bullock Henry (a.k.a. Imari Obadele, 1930–2010)	Technical Writer	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1960–1968	Co-founded the Republic of New Afrika and served as its second president (1971–1991) (Guzmán, 2021)
Oliver Windell Holmes (sometimes spelled "Wendell," 1918–1992)	Editorial Clerk	Atomic Energy Commission	Washington, DC	1948	Previously worked as a journalist; see the workplace photo of him in "Our Scientists" (1948)
Charlotte Russell Hutton (née Coles, 1917–1998)	Technical Writer and Editor	Department of Defense's Armed Services Technical Information Agency	Alexandria, VA	1961–1963	Earned a BS from West Virginia State College (1938) and an MS in Botany from Catholic University of America (1953); pursued further graduate study (1955–56); became a high school science teacher, curriculum developer, and school system administrator in DC; taught as adjunct at Howard University (Hast, 1984, p. 386)
Constance Jackson (life dates unknown)	Editor	Department of Commerce's Coast and Geodetic Survey	Jackson, MS	1960s	Served as a WAC (1949–1954); worked for the Department of Defense (1950s); joined C&GS as a clerk-typist in 1959 and promoted to editor in 1961 (Dunnigan, 1962)
Lawrence Daniel Jenkins (1933–2018)	Technical Illustrator	Wright-Patterson Air Force Base	Dayton, OH	1960s	Graduated Central State College in Wilberforce, OH; painted a portrait of JFK and LBJ together and presented it to Luci Johnson ("Portrait," 1964)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Alexander Wood Johnson (1902–1970)	Technical Writer	Army Training Center, Fort Monmouth	Monmouth County, NJ	1940s–1960s	Had his own radio repair business in 1940; usually used his first initial in place of his first name ("A. Wood," 1970)
Edward A. Jordan (life dates unknown	Technical Writer	Atomic Energy Commission	New York City? Washington, DC?	1953	Reportedly won the George Polk Award as a journalism student at Long Island University ("Polk," 1953)
Henry Leroy King (a.k.a. Henri Umbaji King, 1923–2004)	Technical Illustrator, then Visual Information Specialist	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1957–1984	Co-founder with Enoch and Orr of Kumasi Mart (specializing in African attire) and Kumasi Art Gallery in Detroit in the 1960s ("Visiting," 1966; Maidenberg, 1971)
David Alphonso Lane (1895–1985)	Information-Education Specialist	Office of Armed Forces Information and Education	Fort Huachuca, AZ; Pacific theater; Arlington, VA	1942–1955	Earned a BA from Bowdoin College and an MA in English from Harvard University; served as a dean at West Virginia State College and Louisville Municipal College; pursued further graduate study at the University of Chicago; edited *Armed Forces Talk* ("Defense," 1951).
Arthur Douglas Lanier (1925–2011)	Technical Writer	Rossford Ordnance Depot	Toledo, OH	before 1962	Served as a long-time administrator in Toledo's Urban Renewal Agency ("Gets," 1962)
William Manly Leak (1914–1990)	Technical Editor, later Head of Publications Group	Naval Research Laboratory	Washington, DC	1953–1976	Worked in the War Department from 1942 to 1953 and at Howard University from 1976 to 1987 ("William," 1990); presented "Teamwork in Producing the Annual Report" at the 1973 STC conference

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
James Curtis Leveye (1925–1984)	Technical Writer	Redstone Arsenal	Huntsville, AL	1950s–1980s (?)	Served as treasurer of STC's Central Florida Chapter in 1969; see Caputo (1969) for a photo
W. T. Lyons (1919–2006) [c]	Technical Writer	Naval Personnel Research and Development Laboratory	Washington, DC	1960s	Author of many technical documents for the Navy; also author of three collections of poems, including *Soul in Solitude* (Shockley & Chandler, 1973, p. 102)
Jon Brutus Massey (1919–2008)	Illustrator	Department of Labor	Washington, DC	1950s–1970s	See Harrison (1951) for a photo; created freelance surgical drawings for Johns Hopkins; designed the cover of the 1961 edition of *Occupational Outlook Handbook* ("Brotherhood," 1957)
Catherine Ernetta Mauldin (a.k.a. Kay Alvarado, Emmermann, 1916–2004)	Senior Engineering Draftsman	Army Quartermaster Corps	Chicago, IL	1945	Earned an MA from Lincoln University; served as Arts and Crafts Director for the Army Special Services; lived in Europe for many years ("Catherine," 2004); see Lopez (1945) for a workplace photo
Harry Sylvester McAlpin (1906–1985)	Information Specialist	Department of Agriculture's Sugar Rationing Administration	Washington, DC	1947	Worked as an interviewer, editorial clerk, information specialist, and magazine editor for several government agencies in the US and Korea (1935–1949); later became the NNPA's first White House correspondent (Brodsky, 2018)
Gayle A. Nolan, née Foust (b. 1941)	Cartographer	Chicago Department of Urban Renewal	Chicago	1967	Trained as a graphic artist; drew urban planning and real estate maps; created illustrations and covers for promotional documents ("Cartography," 1967)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
George Elliott Olden (1920–1975)	Senior Artist; Illustrative Draftsman	(1) Works Progress Administration; (2) Office of Strategic Services	Washington, DC	1940–1942; 1943–1945	Studied under Amaza Meredith at Virginia Union University; created WWII posters about gasoline conservation ("Aids," 1941); worked as a graphic artist for CBS (1950s); designed an Emancipation Proclamation stamp for the Post Office Department (1963) (Aller, 2016)
Henry Leon Orr (a.k.a. Obanji, 1927–2014)	Publications Writer; Technical Manual Editor; among others	Army TACOM	Warren, MI	1956–1986	Earned a master's degree in music from the University of Detroit; active in Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) with Henry, Enoch, and King (Gaskill, 1969)
Alyce Ruth Peyton (a.k.a. Bledsoe, 1927–2001)	Clerk (Editing and Tabulating)	Bureau of the Census	New York, NY	1950	Earned a degree in music from Lincoln University; described as an "editor" in the 1950 census; co-founded the Blackpool Brighton Candy Corporation in Los Angeles in the 1980s (Faris, 1984)
Elwood Eugene Randol (1916–1981)	Chief of the Editorial Section	Army's Aviation Materiel Command	St. Louis, MO	1965	Employed by the army from the 1940s to the 1980s; wrote a column titled "It Seems to Me" for the *St. Louis American* ("Army," 1965; "Elwood," 1981)
Eugene Anton Raymond (1909–1989)	Technical Illustrator	Marine Corps Clothing Depot	Philadelphia	1950s–1970s	Founder of the United Friends of Africa; commissioned to paint a portrait of Liberian President W. V. S. Tubman (St. George, 1989)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Charles Archie Reynolds (b. 1927)	Illustrator	Quarter-master Corps' Heraldic Services Division	Washington, DC	1958	Studied at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art (1945–1949); see Peeks (1958) for a photo; supervised the 1975 design of the current seal of the U.S. Vice President
Maggie Lena Robinson (1918–1983)	Editor	Signal Corps, Fort Monmouth	Monmouth County, NJ	1950	Described as "editor" at "government laboratory" in the 1950 U.S. Census; became a school teacher in later years ("Maggie," 1983)
Betty Jane Slade (née Edmonds, a.k.a White, a.k.a Buckner, 1925–2006)	Statistical Artist	Unknown	Columbus, OH	1949–1950	Identified as a "statistical artist" on her 1949 marriage license application and a "graphic artist" in government employment in the 1950 U.S. Census
Tracy Ashton Spinks (1925–1966)	Illustrator	Fort Belvoir	Fairfax County, VA	1956–1957	Served in the army during WWII ("D.C.," 1945; "Brotherhood," 1957)
Marshall Victor Stokes (1922–1969)	Medical Illustrator; Supervisor	Veterans Administration Hospitals	Tuskegee, AL; Boston	before 1950–1969	Specialized in biological photography ("Biological," 1967)
Melvin Burnie Swan (1923–2002)	Illustrator	(1) Demobilized Personnel Records Center; (2) Aeronautical Chart and Information Center	St. Louis, MO	1946–1964	Designed displays for exhibits and visual aids for briefings ("Melvin," 1954)
Patricia Ann Tatem (b. 1946)	Technical Editor	Naval Research Laboratory	Washington, DC	1967–1972	Earned a PhD in Chemistry from George Washington University in 1984 (Henderson, 2000, p. 1293)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
George Robert Taylor (nicknamed "Ronnie," 1926–2010)	Technical Publications Editor	Wright Patterson Air Force Base	Dayton, OH	1950s – 1990s (?)	Held this job for 37 years, eventually becoming head of his department ("Taylor," 2010)
John Henry Terrell (1902–1978)	Technical Illustrator	Philadelphia Naval Shipyard	Philadelphia	1945–1973	Created the comic book detective Ace Harlem for *All Negro Comics* (1947); featured in a national ad campaign for Viceroy cigarettes (Untitled, 1959)
Jeremiah Timothy Weaver (1929–1996)	Illustrator	Department of Recreation	Washington, DC	at least from 1967 to 1970	Had previously been employed by the Department of Agriculture ("Government," 1970)
Charles Herbert Winslow (1925–1998)	Technical Illustrator	Redstone Arsenal	Huntsville, AL	late 1950s	Was a staff member of two magazines for Black readers: *Snap* in San Antonio and *Tone* in Huntsville ("Negro," 1958; "Edmonton," 1960;)
Daniel Leopold Witter (1932–1962)	Technical Writer	Air Force? Private company?	New York City	1962	Born in Jamaica, naturalized in 1951, committed suicide under sensational circumstances ("Writer's Death," 1962)
Lionel Frazier White (b. 1942)	Visual Information Specialist	Department of Labor	Washington, DC	1969	Began as a draftsman circa 1961; promoted to illustrator in 1967, visual information specialist in 1968, and Chief of the Graphics Branch in 1969 (U.S. Department, 1971)
Gretta Viola Whitted (née Spivey, 1937–2016)	Technical Illustrator	Army Ammunition Procurement and Supply Agency (APSA)	Joliet, IL	1959	Previously worked in Joliet's Engineering and Planning Department; later was owner of Graphic Tee Art and Design; founded the Joliet chapter of National Hook-Up of Black Women ("Miss Greta," 1959; "Gretta," 2016)

Name	Job Title	Agency	Location	Date	Comment
Oswald Sparrow Williams (nicknamed "Ozzie," 1921–2005)	Supply Cataloger (Mechanical Equipment) [d]	Naval Material Catalog Office, Bureau of Supplies and Accounts	New York City	1949–1951	As an engineer, helped design the P47 Thunderbolt for Republic Aviation during WWII; worked on the Apollo Lunar Module in the 1960s; became an adjunct university professor in the 1970s (Romano, 1995, p. 2216)
Lymme Masco Young (1922–1989)	Special Assistant (Editor)	Philadelphia Gas Works	Philadelphia	1962	Hired to help create a communications program for employees; edited the personnel manual and employee handbook ("Philadelphia," 1962)

[a] *People who worked under the job title "Editorial Clerk" in the federal government in the 1940s and 1950s often performed technical editing duties for less pay and with less authority than those classified as "Technical Editor." For example, at the Atomic Energy Commission, Black editorial clerk Oliver W. Holmes (CAF-5) was to be paid $2,645 in 1948, while white technical editor Robert C. Tumbleson (CAF-13) was to be paid $7,102 (U.S. House, 1947, p. 868). After adjusting for inflation, the difference was equivalent to approximately $38,696 versus $103,901 in 2024 dollars.*

[b] *A single year in the "Date" column means that the person was known to be working in this job during that year, not necessarily that the person worked in this job for only one year.*

[c] *Lyons had only the initials "W. T." as first and middle names.*

[d] *Romano (1995) and other sources identified Williams as a technical writer for the Naval Material Catalog Office. Documents in his federal civilian personnel file revealed that he did, indeed, perform the work of a technical writer even though his official job title was "Supply Cataloger (Mechanical Equipment)."*

Appendix B. Other Technical Communicators Employed in Industry

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Jackie (Jack) William Adams (1927–1975)	Engineering Artist / Technical Illustrator	Lockheed Georgia Company	Marietta, GA	1953–1975	Studied at Clark College, Morris Brown College, and Tuskegee Institute; known publicly for his fine art (Carter, 1968)
Willie Ruffin Adams (b. 1938)	Technical Illustrator	Western Electric	Winston-Salem, NC	1969	Attended Agricultural and Technical College in North Carolina ("Nancy," 1969)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Bernard Ammons (nicknamed "Bernie," a.k.a. Williams, 1935–2005)	Technical Writer	Raytheon Company	Oxnard, CA	1967–1969	Served in the Air Force in the early 1960s; featured in a national ad campaign of the Advertising Council and Plans for Progress ("Oxnard," 2011; "Who," 1967)
Edith Lorraine Atkinson (née Reed, 1919–2000)	Editor	Collins Radio Company	Cedar Rapids, IA	1959 to at least 1961	Was a typist at Collins for seven years before becoming an editor; edited instruction manuals for grammar and nomenclature ("Editor," 1961)
Albert Lee Barringer (1924–1986)	Proposal Manager	Philco-Ford's Western Development Laboratories	Palo Alto, CA	1964	Received a Purple Heart in WWII; became the director of an anti-poverty program in Berkeley in 1967 and later a HUD administrator in the 1980s ("Philco," 1964; "Albert," 1986)
La Bonnie Bianchi (a.k.a. Townsend, b. 1937)	Technical Writer	Martin Marietta	Baltimore	1960–1963	Graduated from RPI with a master's degree in technical writing (1960); subject of a cover story in *Ebony* ("Woman," 1961); later worked for LTV Aerospace and Ford Motor Company in the Detroit area
Benjamin Elias Booze (1928–2011)	Technical Illustrator	Sperry Rand's Ford Instrument Corporation	Long Island City, NY	1958	Illustrated manuals for Jupiter missiles; see "Long Island Negroes" (1958) for a workplace photo.
Louis Levi Brent (1906–1973)	Technical Writer	Emerson Electric Manufacturing Company	St. Louis	c. 1957–1963	Earned a BS in science from Ohio State and a PhD in psychology from Indiana University ("Funeral," 1973); served as the second chairman of STC's St. Louis Chapter ("Names," 1963)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Clarence LeRoy Campbell (b. 1939)	Technical Writer	Aircraft Armament	Cockeysville, MD	1962	Majored in electrical engineering at the University of Maryland ("Miss Jennie," 1962)
Carole Olivia Chaney (1942–1982)	Technical Writer and Editor	(1) Philco-Ford; (2) IBM	Philadelphia	1960s–1970s	Graduated from Central State University; later known as a radio personality on WEAM in Arlington, VA ("Social," 1967; "Carole," 1982)
David John Chesnut (sometimes misspelled "Chestnut," 1910–1983)	Technical Writer, Manager of Proposals and Presentations	(1) American Machine and Foundry Co. (2) Raytheon Wayland Laboratories	Boston area	1950s–1972	Played drums with Count Basie's band in the 1930s; earned a PhD in psychology; became the first African American fellow of STC in 1969 ("Chesnut," 1969; Burawa, 1970, p. 78)
Eugene Collins (b. circa 1930)	Technical Writer	Technical Services Corporation	Philadelphia	c. 1957–1960	Wrote operation and maintenance manuals and specifications for military equipment ("Writer," 1960)
Marvin Carlyle Dean (1932–1997)	Artist, Draftsman	Training Aids Department, Chrysler Corporation	Detroit, MI	1950s	Joined Chrysler on co-op while attending Cass Technical High School in 1950 (Nunn, 1957); profiled in *Ebony* in 1955
Thomas David Diggs (1927–2020)	Engineering Writer	Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory (operated by Westinghouse for the Navy)	Pittsburgh	1964	Earned a mechanical engineering degree from "Chicago Tech," probably Illinois Institute of Technology (Delahan, 1963, p. 5)
Joseph Dyer (1934–2011)	Technical Editor	Cal Tech's Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL)	Pasadena, CA	1963–1965	Became a reporter, then an executive of a major network television station in Los Angeles (Dyer, 2002, esp. pp. 74–78)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Carl Clifton Frazier (1924–2017)	Technical Writer	General Electric	Cincinnati	1960s–1990s	Earned an associate's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Cincinnati; "sent to the mail room" near the end of his career (Hobson, 1992)
Stephen Bruce Guillory (1935–1999)	Technical Writer	(1) Hughes Aircraft (2) RCA	unknown	1956–1960	Served in the Air Force (1952–1956); graduated from UCLA (1963); worked as a senior field engineer for Litton Industries in Europe (Pryce, n.d.)
Harvey Earl Gordon (1934–1993)	Engineering Writer	Westinghouse Corporation	Baltimore	1968	Graduated with an electrical engineering degree from Howard University in 1959 ("Housing," 1968; "Harvey," 1993)
Vernon "Gil" Gilbert Graves (1934–2023)	Technical Illustrator	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Cambridge, MA	1964	Studied electrical engineering at Harvard University (Garrett, 1964)
Robert Carter Hayden (1937–2022)	Science Editor	Xerox Educational Division	Middletown, CT	1966–1969	Later directed Boston's METCO program and MIT's Secondary Technical Education Project; wrote books about Black history and scientists; served as Boston NAACP president (Marquard, 2022)
Samuel Lloyd Haynes (1934–1987)	Technical Illustrator	(1) Bell Helicopter; (2) Fisher Engineering	San Jose, CA	circa 1960	Played teacher Pete Dixon in the TV series *Room 222* ("TV," 1971)
George Ficklin Keyser (1932–2013)	Technical Writer	Philco Corporation, Western Development Laboratories	Palo Alto, CA	1960–1965	Later became a professor at Howard University; published "Learn Through Writing in an Engineering Course" in *IEEE TPC* (Keyser & De Loatch, 1984)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Horatius David "Hoe" Johnson (1921–1991)	Technical Illustrator	Cooper Publications	Los Angeles	1959	Studied fine arts at Lincoln University in Missouri ("Johnson's Scene," 1945; "Most," 1959)
Jennie Ruth Johnston (a.k.a. Bookhart, possibly Jones, b. circa 1933)	Technical Editor	Bell Laboratories	New York City	1959–1960	Attended City College of New York ("Enchanting," 1959; "Pound," 1960)
John Augustus Locksley (1923–2008)	Technical Illustrator	John I. Thompson & Company	Washington DC	1956–1957	Attended Dunbar High School and Howard University ("Tuberculosis," 1942; "Brotherhood," 1957)
Alfred Edward Martin (1911–1993)	Technical Editor	McGraw-Hill	New York City	1957–1959	Enjoyed a long career as a physics professor (Sammons, 1990, p. 162)
Melmon May (b. 1940)	Trade and Technical Copywriter	Smith, Kline, & French Laboratories	Philadelphia	1966	Graduated from Miami University in 1962; became an insurance company executive in later years ("SK&F," 1966; "Career," 1993)
George Daniel Mercer (1923–2012)	Technical Illustrator	Vitro Laboratories	Silver Spring, MD	Unknown (probably 1950s or 1960s)	Drew cartoon strips for the *Baltimore Afro-American*; later designed stamps as a visual information specialist for the USPS ("After," 1948; McDonough, 2012)
William Harrell McPherson (1927–2016)	Technical Writer	North American Aviation	*El Segundo, CA*	1963–1967	Graduated from Morehouse College in 1948 (Matney, 1976, p. 432)
Donald Ross McSween (1932–2000)	Technical Writer	Jervis B. Webb Company	Detroit	1968–1970	Served in the Air Force in Korea ("Motor," 1970)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Ronald Lescor Mimms (b. 1935)	Technical Writer	IBM	Poughkeepsie, NY	1964	Active in STC's Mid-Hudson Chapter in the early 1960s; served as president of an NAACP branch ("Writer," 1964)
George Frederick Moore (1926–2019)	Technical Illustrator	Warner Company	Syracuse, NY	1951	Publicized as the first Black man to be hired as a technical illustrator at the Warner Company ("Corporation," 1951)
Naida Alzaida Page (née Willette, 1925–2013)	Medical Illustrator	(1) Johns Hopkins University (2) Howard University	Baltimore; Washington, DC	1949–1960s (and likely beyond)	Reportedly the first Black woman to be formally educated as a medical illustrator ("Medical," 1951)
James Eugene Pittman (1925–2013)	Technical Writer	AC Electronics Division of General Motors	Milwaukee	1960s	Graduated with a BS in electrical engineering from the University of Maryland in 1960; served as Vice Chairman of STC's Milwaukee Chapter ("January," 1963; "James," 2013)
Donald E. Ried (b. 1933)	Technical Writer	Hewlett-Packard Company	Palo Alto, CA	1968	Led a campaign to change the name of East Palo Alto to "Nairobi" (Spangler, 1968)
Adolph Joel Robinson (1915–2012)	Technical Illustrator	William Douglas McAdams Pharmaceutical Advertising Agency	New York City	1940s	Educated as an architect; became famous as a fabric designer; also engaged in furniture design, book cover design, and fine art ("Fabric," 1952)
Frances Delores Ross (1935–1985)	Technical Editor	McGraw-Hill Publishing	New York City	1961	Better known as "Fran Ross"; remembered for her novel *Oreo* and as a comedy writer for Richard Pryor ("Social," 1961; Mullen, 2015)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Ralph "Sonny" Satterthwaite (1938–2019)	Illustrator	General Electric	Philadelphia	at least 1966–1971	Was GE's art director for the Air Force's Manned Orbiting Laboratory ("Creative," 1971; "Satterthwaite," 2019)
Richard Tom Satterwhite (1932–1992)	Scientific Illustrator	Carnegie Museum	Pittsburgh	1968	Specialized in entomological illustration ("Entomological," 1968)
Robert Francis Scott (1918–1989)	Technical Editor	*Radio-Electronics* magazine	New York City	1940s–1970s	Graduated from Agricultural and Technical College, Greensboro, NC, in the 1930s; invited to visit Japan as a speaker ("Invited," 1965)
Harry Cornelius Taylor (b. 1938)	Technical Editor	National Radio Institute	Washington DC	1960s–1970s	Wrote and edited "lessons and kit manuals" for NRI courses; served as NRI national secretary in the 1980s ("Miss Browne," 1962; Taylor, 1979, p. 23)
Genevieve Rucker (née Teague, a.k.a. Jean-Pierre, b. 1940)	Technical Illustrator	IBM	Binghamton, NY	1965	Graduated from Spelman College in 1962; participated in IBM's Executive Loan Program in the 1990s ("IBM," 1965; "Women," 1964; "Appointments," 1993)
Arzell Thompson (b. 1943)	Technical Illustrator	Twin Disc	Racine, WI	late 1960s	Trained as a technical illustrator in the Air Force (Thompson, 2016)
Ruth Eileen Turner (a.k.a. Baccus, Mitchell, b. 1944)	Technical Writer	IBM	*Poughkeepsie, NY*	1965	Graduated from Fisk University in 1964 ("Ruth," 1965); earned a PhD from the University of Connecticut in 1978; served as president of two colleges (Chassie, 2005, p. 30)

Person	Job Title	Company	Location	Date	Comment
Edwin Clinton Washington (1922–2020)	Technical Illustrator	Ling-Temco-Vought	Dallas	1964	Was an NAACP leader in Dallas in the 1950s and 1960s ("NAACP," 1964); co-founded Black Citizens for Justice, Law & Order in 1969 ("Edwin," 2020)
William Joseph White (1926–2014)	Technical Writer	Andrea Radio and TV	Unknown (Long Island, NY?)	1955	Published his memoirs as *Triangle Hill* (White, 2011, p. 223)
Ray Hicks Waters (sometimes spelled "Warters," b. 1938)	Technical Illustrator	McDonnell Aircraft	St. Louis	1963	Attended San Diego State University ("Miss Brenda," 1963)
John Wilbert Weaver (1921–1996)	Technical Writer	"several corporations" (possibly Sylvania)	East Coast (likely Boston area)	1950s–1960s (?)	Graduated from Howard University in 1944; served in the Navy during WWII; see "AVCO-Roxbury" (1969) for a workplace photo
Nasira Fatima Wilkins (née Ledbetter, 1929–1994)	Technical Editor	Rocketdyne (North American Aviation)	Los Angeles	1959	Earned a master's degree in physics from Howard University (1953); described as a "space rocket editor" ("Space," 1959)