

# ATTW 2020

## President's Welcome

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Welcome to the 23<sup>rd</sup> ATTW Conference—ATTW's first virtual conference! And thank you for joining us today, especially given the collective and personal trauma you've experienced over the past year. We appreciate you making and holding space for the important work happening in our community. Originally planned for Milwaukee, WI, the pandemic postponement of our conference has allowed us to convene online this year from all over the nation and beyond. I am grateful for the places and spaces that have held us up since last March and for the networks and ecologies that will sustain us and our technologies this week, including landbases, waterways, flora, and fauna.

I begin, then, with a land acknowledgement of the place from which I am engaging y'all today. Bloomington-Normal is located in Central Illinois—and the twin cities and Illinois State University sit on Indigenous land. These lands are the traditional birthright of Indigenous people who were forcibly removed and have faced centuries of struggle for survival, resistance, and identity. Specifically, this place is the ancestral home of the Illini, Peoria, and Myaamia—and later, due to colonial encroachment and

displacement, the lands of the Fox, Potawatomi, Sauk, Shawnee, Winnebago, Ioway, Mascouten, Piankashaw, Wea, and Kickapoo Nations. I acknowledge this dispossession and displacement, as well as the intergenerational trauma that resulted. I also apologize to the Indigenous communities I may have excluded due to colonial erasure and historical inaccuracy.

I also acknowledge that enslaved labor helped to build the state of Illinois itself—and thus gave rise to its institutions, including Illinois State University. The Illinois State Archives evidence the prevalence of slavery in at least six counties in Southern Illinois before and during early statehood, with thousands of names of Black and Native Americans on servitude and emancipation records from 1722-1863. I recognize this inhumane treatment and uncompensated labor as well as the intergenerational wealth it denied and trauma it caused.

I have a responsibility to continue to learn and share the histories and present-day realities of Indigenous and Black communities from their perspectives and use my privilege and position to redress the ongoing violence of settler colonialism and racism in my spheres of influence. I invite you to practice land and labor acknowledgements with humility and gratitude, and grow your Indigenous and Black cultural literacies, especially in relation to the landbases that sustain you.

As for ATTW cultural literacies, our organization began as a meeting at the 1973 CCCC conference in New Orleans. According to Dan Cunningham—a founding member of ATTW and founding editor of *The Technical Writing Teacher* (now *Technical Communication Quarterly*)—“ATTW evolves as individuals identify needs of people . . . and implement plans to meet those needs” (2004, 130). As such, 48 years later, Dr. Laura Gonzales (University of Florida) and Dr. Ann Shivers-McNair (University of Arizona) have facilitated our organizational evolution with their visionary

theme: “Language, Access, and Power in Technical Communication.” Their conference call resulted in the most proposal submissions in ATTW conference history, and now a year later, the intersections of language, access, and power on our bodies, work, and worlds seem all the more exigent since the start of the pandemic. Drs. Gonzales and Shivers-McNair, along with conference strategist Dr. Khirsten L. Scott (University of Pittsburgh), have also co-designed our most accessible conference to date. Please join me in thanking Drs. Gonzales, Shivers-McNair, and Scott—as well as our ASL interpreters (provided by CDJ Interpreting) and CART Captioning (provided by ALa CARTE Connection).

I hope y'all are as excited as I am to learn with other technical communication teacher-scholar-practitioners and community members over the next three and a half days. The outstanding program our co-chairs designed for us—for the second time now, due to the postponement of the 2020 conference—provides productive opportunities to engage with scholarship and critical praxis on how language, access, and power intersect in diverse and complex ways. We enjoyed a great start this past week with Dr. Dev Bose's (University of Arizona) helpful pre-conference workshop on designing accessible presentations with universal design learning frameworks and practices. If you didn't have the chance to participate, you may access his resource-rich slides via the online conference program.

The two keynotes are not to be missed. Dr. Josie Walwema's (University of Washington) talk today, “Contingency and International Scholars' Experience in US Academic Spaces,” and Maria Barker (Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin) and Dr. Rachel Bloom-Pojar's (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) presentation on Tuesday, “The Power of Language in Building Confianza with Communities,” will equip us with more culturally-responsive ways

to build and work in community and advocate for vulnerable and precarious folk therein.

Over the next two days, plan to attend as many of the eight concurrent sessions you can. Networking venues are provided every day, and please don't forget to check out the poster sessions and attend the awards reception on Wednesday. The program is packed with innovative research, teaching, and reflections on: international, community-based, and cross-cultural technical, scientific, and professional communication; methodologies and methods; social media literacies and pedagogies; content strategy and management; environmental and human rights and justice; public rhetorics and civic engagement; inclusive design, usability, and localization; stories, narratives, and disciplinary, institutional, programmatic, organizational, and community identities and infrastructures; and ethics and advocacy. This important work is situated across dozens of data collection sites with wide-ranging implications for a variety of stakeholders. In reviewing the program and planning my conference experience, I'm proud to observe what I understand to be responses to the 2016 call from Natasha N. Jones for technical communicators to "move away from considering social justice issues on a purely descriptive level toward research and pedagogy that promotes agency and advocacy and fosters collaboration for and about social change across disciplines, domains, and communities while engaging critical cultural concerns within and outside of the academy" (2016, 357). Many thanks to our next ATTW President and to our presenters for sharing your expertise with us.

ATTW is a non-profit organization, and the good work we do is achieved with donated time, labor, and expertise. I appreciate all y'all who served as proposal reviewers for the program and

application reviewers for award committees. I also have much love for our executive committee. We strive to be accountable to our diverse membership and to the many communities and rhetorical contexts that our conference program and participants invite us to consider. My respect and gratitude deepens for our brilliant and responsive executive committee on every occasion I have to work with them. A special shout-out to Natasha N. Jones, Laura Gonzales, Michelle Eble, Michele Simmons, Ann Blakeslee, Bill Hart-Davidson, Han Yu, Kristen Moore, Rebecca Walton, and Tharon Howard for all the useful and usable insights, feedback, and labor on all the ATTW things—and to our ATTW Communication Team, Joy Robinson and Lisa Dusenberry. If you encounter our executive committee members at our virtual conference, please thank them—along with the ASL interpreters, CART staff, live conference tweeters, session co-hosts and chairs, DJ Dr. Victor Del Hierro, and our conference co-chairs and strategist.

All this to say, some of the best people I know, some of them familia, have come together to provide us with an incredible conference. I am honored to be a part of the ATTW leadership team and am thrilled to celebrate our organization's successes with y'all. Whether new or returning to the conference, I am delighted you are here! Please take the time to expand your networks and strengthen your relations by listening to new voices, learning fresh perspectives, and respecting and amplifying historically marginalized voices toward sustaining our ongoing tradition as an inclusive and supportive professional organization.

## References

- Cunningham, Don. 2004. "The Founding of ATTW and Its Journal." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 13(1): 121-130.
- Jones, Natasha N. 2016. "The Technical Communicator as Advocate: Integrating a Social Justice Approach in Technical Communication." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 46(3): 342-361.

## About the Author

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