An Approach to Teaching Pattern Recognition for Professional Writing
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Asking students to learn and then write in recognizable “modes” (comparison/contrast, cause and effect, problem/solution, etc.) is a longstanding convention and practice in college writing pedagogy. Typically, the purpose of composition instruction is to prepare writing students to tackle the writing assignments they will encounter in subsequent courses. However, technical writing for computer science and engineering professionals (CSS 301) shifts this pedagogy and explicitly proposes to prepare students for the on-the-job writing tasks they will face after graduation. In their real-world context, these professionals will not be “assigned” a particular mode (pattern), but rather be given a “sample” document from another project and asked to “create one just like this for your project.” It is therefore essential that he or she be able to analyze a writing task in order to recognize where information goes, map the information to the pattern, and write the document. This means the professional develops his or her ability to quickly recognize the purpose of a real-world writing task, map that to the needs of the reader, then lastly, provide the best delivery of that information. In this poster, the authors present a model for staging a successful learning sequence which combines student writing (including rewriting) with practice in situational awareness involving rhetorical cues (“keywords” and phrases).