

# How to Write a Technical Article

by Kelly M. Page

**W**hen I am at meetings and conventions with ICRI members, discussions often turn to the *Concrete Repair Bulletin* and how we are always looking for good articles. This often elicits one of the following responses: “I am not a good writer,” “I don’t feel comfortable writing an article,” “I have this great project, but I don’t know where to start to turn it into an article,” etc. To help our many potential authors out there, here are some pointers.

## Content

There are several types of articles we publish in the *CRB*. They can be project case histories; experiences with a new tool, material, or practice; new ways of using industry standard practices; and so on. And though we do have a theme for every issue of the *CRB*, articles do not necessarily have to fit a specific theme. If we receive an article that we know will be of interest to our readers, we will find an issue in which to publish it.

Another factor to consider when writing is that the submission must not contain specific product or company names. If you are writing about a specific project, use generic terms such as “contractor” and “engineer.” Submit the names of the project team, and we will include them at the end of the article. And if you are writing about a specific type of product, you must use the generic name of the product so the article does not come across as a dressed-up marketing piece.

Finally, some of the best articles we have printed have been from authors who did not consider themselves “good” writers. History shows, however, that some of the most-read articles have been from those with hands-on experience, submitted by working practitioners for whom writing for publication might not come naturally. Remember that the writing does not have to be perfect—as long as the facts are correct—we have a staff of editors and proofreaders who can turn your submission into a publication-quality article.

## Writing Style

The best style for technical articles is to present the information as clearly as possible. Occasionally, we receive submissions in which the author seems to be trying too hard to impress by using large words, when short words would suffice, or long, complicated sentences. Adding extraneous information or lengthening phrases and sentences was for English classes with word number requirements; a good technical article is as short and concise as it can be to convey its point.

Keep in mind that the main readership of the *CRB* is concrete repair practitioners. Leading practitioners are busy people who place a premium on accessible information. Big words and complicated sentences do not impress them. They are looking for well-written articles that quickly cut to the heart of the issue at hand. Also, typically the more practical and field-oriented articles are the most well-received by our readership.

## Submitting Short Papers

I have also talked to contractors who tell me about a fascinating project, and when I ask them to write about it, they are reluctant. Again, a submission does not have to be lengthy. Even if you only have several paragraphs of job facts and some great photos of the work, staff can work with you to turn this into an interesting project case history type of article.

The main question we ask when looking at an article is, “Does it make a contribution to improving the quality of concrete repair?” If there is someone among our readership that will learn something from your article that will help improve the quality of the industry, then your article meets the goal of the magazine and the overall mission of ICRI.

If you have ideas about a potential article, please do not hesitate to contact me at 847-827-0830 or [kelly.page@icri.org](mailto:kelly.page@icri.org). I look forward to hearing from you!



# Publication Guidelines

# CONCRETE REPAIR BULLETIN

The bimonthly publication of the International Concrete Repair Institute

*Concrete Repair Bulletin* is a bimonthly magazine published by the International Concrete Repair Institute (ICRI). The average size is 40 to 48 pages, and the present circulation is approximately 14,000 copies. Readership includes engineers, contractors, facility owners, manufacturers, distributors, and educators involved in the concrete repair industry.

**Topics** cover all areas of concrete repair (no new construction) such as buildings, parking structures, roads and bridges, materials for repair, and methods of repair. Each issue has a central theme; however, other topics may be presented. Articles are primarily written by members. With rare exceptions, specific product names are not mentioned in articles. The Publications Committee and/or ad hoc advisory group reviews and approves articles before publication.

**Photos** may be submitted in color or black and white in glossy print, slide, or transparency form. Ideal cover photos are vertical shots and feature one or more persons, show action, and have clear colors. Photos will be returned if requested.

**Feature articles** in the *Concrete Repair Bulletin* are intended to give readers information on methods, equipment, or materials to broaden their general knowledge of the repair industry. Articles are required to be general or generic in nature and pertain to a range of materials, techniques, applications, or other activities. Although a process or material may at present be performed or supplied by a single source, this fact is not included in the text. The author is given a byline and a brief biography and photo are published with the article. Feature articles must not appear to promote one product over other similar available products, even without brand names mentioned. Case studies are desirable to illustrate successful use of the subject of the article.

## Specifications for feature articles:

- Average length is 1500 to 2000 words for feature articles;
- Product names are not used;
- A short author biography is needed;
- Please submit an electronic file of the text, in Word or WordPerfect, on any IBM-compatible disk, or via e-mail;
- Three printed copies of the manuscript are needed if submitting in hard copy form;
- "Head shot" photo(s) of the author(s) is requested;
- Four to six illustrations are preferred for feature articles (photos, tables, charts, detail drawings);
- Color photos are preferred;
- Glossy photographic prints and/or 35 mm slides are required for the best printing reproduction. After scanning these original prints and/or slides, the digital files can be enlarged or reduced as needed without any image degradation. Note that we cannot accept color inkjet printouts and color copies of photos, which will produce inferior results;
- High-quality glossy laser printouts are acceptable only for black and white and color line art—not for photos. Do not use gray scale or gray tone in line art;
- If it is necessary to submit digital images, high-resolution files are needed: Photos in TIFF format at 300 dpi minimum, sized at 4 x 6 in. for general photos and at 1-1/4 x 1-3/4 in. minimum for author photos; line art should be TIFF, JPEG, or EPS files at 400 dpi, same size as originals. Please send electronic image files to us on CD, ZIP, or JAZ disks;
- Do you have additional photos available as possible cover art? If so, large, glossy prints, 35 mm slides, and/or smaller photos with negatives can be considered;
- We are unable to use embedded graphics as submitted final manuscript materials unless they are 300 dpi at 4 x 6 in. Because of the lower resolutions often found in embedded graphics in word processing or slide presentation program files, the images generally convert as files with well below the print quality and enlargement capabilities required; and
- All submitted artwork will be returned after publication if requested.

## Project Profiles

Project profiles are articles that may refer to the use of a single product or family of products in a successful application on a particular project or group of similar projects. The names of manufacturers or products are not used in the text. It is acceptable and desirable to state specific properties of a product (e.g., strength, percent of elongation) to point out their importance in the specific application. The author is given a byline and a brief biography and photo are published with the article.

## Specifications for Project Profiles

- Average length is 500 to 1000 words;
- Profiles should include: project name and location; type of repair; square footage of repair; total project cost; listing of contractor, structural engineer, and material supplier; age of structure; and completion date;
- Product names are not used;
- A short author biography is needed;
- Please submit an electronic file of the text, in Word or WordPerfect, on any IBM-compatible disk, or via e-mail;
- Three printed copies of the manuscript are needed if submitting in hard copy form;
- "Head shot" photo(s) of the author(s) is requested; and
- Photos are very desirable (see under "Specifications for feature articles" for photo/illustration specifications).

## New Products

New product listings are included as a service to the readers to keep abreast of the latest materials, equipment, and services available to the industry. A summary (approximately 50 to 75 words) of product information and a photo, if available, are included in each listing.

(For more information, contact Kelly Page, ICRI Executive/Technical Director, at 847-827-0830)