

KRISTIN GECAN

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SUMMARY

Researcher and educator drawing on 15+ years as a communications professional in nonprofit, mission-driven organizations, translating complex research and ideas for professional and public audiences. PhD research takes multimodal practice as the locus for building durable skills at the intersection of design literacy and human rhetorical agency. Builder of content ecosystems, thought leadership platforms, and content franchises. Experienced managing cross-functional and matrixed teams and engaging senior executives, faculty, board members, and external stakeholders.

EDUCATION

PhD, Design , Institute of Design at Illinois Tech	May 2028
Focus: Writing pedagogy, multiliteracies, and strengthening human agency in AI-augmented environments	
MA, Humanities , University of Chicago	June 2017
Focus: Creative Nonfiction Writing and Art History Corbel Scholarship for exceptional academic promise	
Cert, Professional Editing , University of Chicago	July 2017
Cert, Nonprofit Board Leadership , University of Chicago	November 2014
BA, English Writing and French Illinois Wesleyan University	May 2004
Double major, Humanities Award Nominee	

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty North Central College, Naperville, IL	August 2024–Present
– Teach Writing, Rhetoric, & Digital Studies to undergraduate students (first through fourth year) – Develop outcomes-focused syllabus in which students strengthen critical thinking and communication while developing distinct perspectives critically engaging with the digital rhetoric surrounding them – Integrate topics with current relevance, including AI literacy, biotechnology ethics alongside classic rhetorical frameworks – Apply multiliteracies pedagogy and multimodal composition for writing-intensive course – Assessed by department head through class observation	
Adjunct Faculty Institute of Design at Illinois Tech, Chicago, IL	August 2021–December 2022
– Taught Writing for Impact to graduate students; for many English is a second language – Emphasized rhetorical awareness, professional communication, and writing for diverse audiences	

- Developed assignments integrating technical writing, workplace writing, and writing in the professions
- Assessed student learning outcomes: 91% of students reported receiving constructive feedback “all of the time”; 100% agreed or strongly agreed they achieved course learning objectives (Fall 2022 course evaluation)

English Language Teacher

2004–2005

French Ministry of National Education, Martinique

- Taught English language and literacy to French-speaking primary school students
- Created engaging multimodal activities and pedagogical approaches for young students

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Dean & Senior Director of Content

2018–Present

Institute of Design at Illinois Tech, Chicago, IL

- Editor-in-chief of id.iit.edu, building and leading all content strategy, editorial operations, and knowledge translation for a distinct and internationally recognized graduate school of design
- Architect content ecosystem approach connecting graduate school, research labs, publications, podcast, public programs, and digital platforms
- Commission, develop, and edit six books and reports, translating research for non-academic audiences with intellectual rigor: *Impact by Design* (2026), “Taking Responsibility in the Age of AI” (2024), “Lead with Purpose” (2020)
- Create Shapeshift platform and drive all content and communications for the 2025 Summit focused on Responsible AI, convening researchers, executives, and practitioners to develop shared frameworks for responsible AI adoption
- Create, host, and produce With Intent podcast—a multimodal content franchise ranking in the top 15% of podcasts globally, encompassing public conversations and panel discussions featuring researchers, practitioners, and executives
- Develop and manage high-visibility external partnerships including Fortune, Google Arts & Culture, Chicago Humanities, New European Bauhaus, and Bauhaus Centennial
- Conduct audience research and apply intelligence to inform editorial priorities, content strategy, and channel mix across owned, earned, and digital platforms
- Lead Institute of Design brand redevelopment with COLLINS, resulting in seven industry awards and a design patent (U.S. Patent No. D1,090,688, 2025)
- Direct endowed programming including the Lucas J. Daniel Series and Latham Fellowships; manage budgets, faculty contributions, operations, and promotions
- Orchestrate team of content, design, and digital specialists

Associate Director of Editorial

2014–2018

University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

- Directed editorial team for university’s in-house creative agency; received three promotions, ultimately serving on senior leadership team

- Client lead, copywriter, and project manager of award-winning creative, including annual reports, websites, fundraising materials, video scripts, and digital campaigns for audiences ranging from prospective students to major donors
- Developed brand strategy methodology and data-driven messaging frameworks adopted across university communications
- Honored by CASE Circle of Excellence Awards: Gold, Multi-Institution Collaborative Programs (2015); Silver, Promotional Publications (2018)

Interim Media and Marketing Director 2009–2014
Poetry Foundation, Chicago, IL

- Directed all communications for one of the largest literary organizations in the world
- Grew social media audience to 340K+ followers across four then-new digital platforms through audience intelligence and data-led content strategy
- Managed earned and paid media, securing coverage in *The Economist*, NPR, and beyond, and developing partnerships with the PBS NewsHour and *The New York Times*
- Prepared National Magazine Award submissions, resulting in four awards and eight nominations

Associate Editor and Bilingual Research Coordinator 2007–2009
Cision, Chicago, IL

- Researched and updated broadcast media database for francophone North America
- Wrote weekly feature articles on communications best practices for PR professionals

**RESEARCH IN
PROGRESS**

- Ekphrastic Co-Writing for Design Literacy** (IRB-2025-129, 2023–Present)
- Investigating how collaborative visual-to-verbal translation exercises develop critical thinking and writing capabilities
 - Workshop-based intervention research with pre/post assessment, qualitative interviews, and computational text analysis (NLP)
 - Examining multiliteracies approaches to writing pedagogy in AI-augmented environments
 - Findings inform pedagogical strategies for teaching critical thinking, rhetorical awareness, and human agency

**PUBLICATIONS &
PRESENTATIONS**

- Institutional Research Reports & Books**
- Editor, *Impact By Design* (2026)—Book establishing patterns outcomes-oriented designers can follow
 - Editor, “Taking Responsibility in the Age of AI” (2024)—Publication asserting value of design in the age of AI

- Editor, *Where Must Design Go Next?* (2023)—Book exploring faculty perspectives about the future of design
- Editor, “Lead with Purpose” (2020)—Publication defining key approaches of design-led organizations
- Editorial contributor, “Tomorrow’s Critical Design Competencies,” *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation* (2020)

Book Reviews

- Review of Yates McKee, *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*, *Chicago Review*, 2018

Conferences

- “The Futures We Forgot: Reopening the Collective Closures in Personal Technologies to Strengthen Human Agency,” Philosophy of Human-Technology Relations Conference, TU Delft, The Hague, Netherlands, September 2026 (paper presentation)
- “Articulating Artifacts and Picturing Possibilities,” Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 2025 (workshop facilitator)
- “Articulating Artifacts and Picturing Possibilities,” The Image Conference, online, 2025 (workshop facilitator)
- “Is It Cake? A Potluck Approach for Ekphrastic Co-Writing and Design Literacy,” Writing Innovation Symposium, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, 2025 (flash talk)
- “What’s Attention Got to Do With It?,” Watson Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, University of Louisville, online, 2024 (invited participant)

Podcast & Media

- Creator, host, and executive producer, *With Intent* podcast—interviews with researchers and design practitioners

AWARDS & DISTINCTIONS

- Emerging Scholar Award, Seventeenth International Conference on The Image, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (2026)
- Design Patent, U.S. Patent No. D1,090,688 (issued August 26, 2025)—typeface design for Institute of Design brand identity, with COLLINS; 15-year term
- Corbel Scholarship, University of Chicago (2017)—awarded for exceptional academic promise
- Humanities Award Nominee, Illinois Wesleyan University (2004)

The following awards were received by COLLINS for the Institute of Design rebrand (2022–23); I led the project on the client/institution side:

- D&AD Awards—Graphite Pencil, Branding Category, 2023
- DesignWeek Awards—Winner, Identity Design – Rebrand Category, 2023
- AIGA Awards—Winner, Brand & Identity Systems Category, 2023
- TDC Awards—Winner, Brand Identity System Category, 2023

- CommArts Design Awards–Winner, Integrated Branding Programs Category, 2023
- ADC Awards–Shortlist, 2023
- Creative Review Awards–Honorable Mention, 2023

The following awards were received by the University of Chicago; I was a contributing collaborator:

- CASE Circle of Excellence–Silver, Promotional Publications, University of Chicago, 2018
- CASE Circle of Excellence–Gold, Multi-Institution Collaborative Programs, University of Chicago, 2015

SCHOLARLY SERVICE	Reviewer , <i>CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design & the Arts</i> Nonfiction Editor , <i>Chicago Review</i>	2025 2015–2018
NONPROFIT SERVICE	The Delivery Fellowship , Board Member Eschtivus Foundation , Volunteer Snow City Arts , Auxiliary Board Member	January 2026–Present September 2010–Present July 2015–December 2017
SKILLS & TOOLS	Pedagogical Training – Multiliteracies pedagogy and multimodal composition – Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles – Outcomes-based course design and iterative assessment – AI literacy integration in writing instruction AI & LLM platforms: ChatGPT, Claude, Midjourney, NotebookLM, Perplexity Editorial & content: Developmental editing, long-form editing, substantive editing, content ecosystem architecture, content franchise development, multimodal storytelling, narrative strategy, audience intelligence, data-led content strategy, brand voice, podcast production Content management systems: WordPress, Squarespace, Expression Engine, GatherContent Learning management systems: Canvas Digital writing & workplace tools: Adobe Acrobat, Figma, MailChimp, MyEmma, Hootsuite, Sprout Social Productivity & PM: Asana, Basecamp, Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, Notion Programming: Python (introductory; research applications including NLP and computational text analysis); HTML/CSS (working knowledge; personal site development and deployment via GitHub Pages) Languages: English (native), French (fluent)	