

## Invention, Innovation, Ingenuity: Buzzwords for 2001

by Melanie G. Flanders, Chief Information Architect, KnowledgeMasters, Inc.

When the call for entries to the STC Houston technical communication competitions arrived in our mailboxes last year, it encouraged us to “communicate outside the box”: to be creative and seek new solutions for existing problems.



Last April a group of chapter members met to step outside the box and brainstorm a theme for the Region 5

Conference to be held October 11–13, 2001 in Houston.

We set our minds free and decided that “Invention, Innovation, Ingenuity” spoke to us more than any other ideas. Thus a theme was born.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines these words as follows:

- *Invention*: The act or process of producing or contriving something previously unknown by ingenuity or imagination.
- *Innovation*: The act of introducing something new.

- *Ingenuity*: 1. Inventive skill or imagination; cleverness.  
2. Imaginative and clever design or construction.

When we had our theme, the next step was to develop a conference logo that communicated these ideas.

Two very talented graphic artists rendered six logo concepts, and the planning group met again to review them and select one.

We decided on teal and white as conference theme colors. We ordered a few shirts with the logo on them so we could command a presence at last year’s Region 5 Conference in Albuquerque.

Many members are working on the Houston conference. We need more players—members with the qualities necessary to help us produce a conference embodying the conference theme.

We also need corporate sponsors to help defray the costs of putting together a conference for 300 attendees.

To participate, contact one of the conference co-managers, Melanie G.

Flanders and Nicole Smart-Wycislo, or visit <http://www.stc-houston.org>.

On January 26 we will honor those who have dared to think outside the box and have produced winning technical publications, online communication, technical art, and technical videos. At the awards banquet these examples of excellence will be on display.

Take advantage of this opportunity to meet and network with the people who produced these works and the management that gave them the support and freedom to be inventive, innovative, and ingenious. You could leave the banquet with enough food for thought to have a feast of ideas.

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## Dateline Houston

*Dateline Houston* is the newsletter of the Houston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit organization. Ten issues are published each year (September through June).

### Newsletter Staff

Managing Editor: Rhonda Hector  
Layout Editor: Erika Frensley  
Coordinating Editor: Lisa Muenchow  
Features Editor: Donna Marcotte  
Story Editors: Melanie Boston, Jamie Diamandopoulos, Jim Hunt  
Staff Writers: Heather Shelly, Lisetta Lavy

### Submissions

Submit newsletter contributions by the first of each month for the coming month's issue. Submissions in ASCII, Microsoft Word 97, or FrameMaker 5.x format are appreciated. Send submissions to Rhonda Hector:

e-mail: rhonda@newmc.cc

phone: 832-200-9000, ext. 107

All submissions are subject to editing.

### Reprints

Articles published by *Dateline Houston* may be reprinted in other STC publications provided credit is given and a copy is sent to the managing editor for *Dateline Houston*.

### Address Changes

Send address changes to the database and directory manager:

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### Production

*Dateline Houston* is produced with FrameMaker 6.0 on a PC, using clip art from CorelDraw 4.0, Microsoft Word 97, and other sources.

### Printing

Some of the costs associated with printing *Dateline Houston* are donated by IKON Office Solutions.

### Cover

The cover is based on an original photograph by Catherine Bendig. The graphic design is by Ruth Metcalf.

The membership directory password is homer+wagner.

# January Volunteer of the Month

by Peggy Head, Contract Technical Writer, RHI Consulting

January's volunteer of the month is Steve Shriver. Not only is he this year's program manager, but he also enthusiastically participates in the Online Documentation and Information Mapping special interest groups (SIGs) and Share the Knowledge (STK) workshops.

Steve received a degree in News-Editorial Journalism from the University of Kansas. He worked as a newspaper reporter, an insurance agent, an advertising consultant for the Yellow Pages, and a stockbroker before becoming a technical writer in 1993.

After working as a technical writer at Compaq for five years, then working two years at Chase Bank, Steve has returned to Compaq, where he documents the administrative tool for CompaqDirect.

Steve has recruited prestigious speakers for this year's general meetings: Karen Schriver, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; John Hedtke, from Seattle, Washington; Andrea Ames, from Redwood City, California; and John Lienhard, from the University of Houston and KUHF ("The Engines of our Ingenuity").

Steve is truly an enterprising program manager. When he can't arrange for STC Houston to share travel expenses with the Lone Star chapter in Dallas, he transforms his home into a virtual bed-and-breakfast (complete with chauffeur service). His wife, Eileen, deserves our thanks for rolling out the red carpet for our guest speakers. (Eileen, a freelance interpreter for hearing-impaired persons, occasionally attends STC meetings with Steve.)

Steve became interested in Information Mapping two years ago when he planned an STK workshop on the topic. This very popular STK presentation gave him the incentive to organize an Information Mapping SIG for our chapter. A strong supporter of Information Mapping, Steve takes an active role in planning and promoting the SIG, which meets at HAL-PC on the first Monday of each month.

Steve is an advocate for our profession, as evidenced by his major accomplishments for STC and by his knack for networking and sharing the perfect sentiment to encourage his fellow writers. He is indeed a valuable asset for our chapter.

**Author's note:** Thanks to Dorothy Murray, John Turner, and Deborah Long for contributing to this article.

**Note:** The newsletter staff apologizes to Heather Shelly for the accidental omission of the Volunteer of the Month column in December. Read about Heather's numerous contributions to the chapter on page 4.

*The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.*

# From the President . . . Looking Back and to the Future

by Deborah Long, Strategic Communications, Enron Net Works

Reflecting on the last months of 2000, I cannot help but feel a sense of pride regarding members' enthusiastic participation in chapter activities. First, the attendance at our monthly meetings was high...with new members and guests showing up, as well as old members returning to see what was happening. I also noticed that our networking sessions before the formal programs seemed to be quite lively and all-inclusive. (I hated to break up the conversations, but "the show must go on." Perhaps we need to have purely networking get-togethers or extend the time.)



Deborah Long

Another observation was the positive response when recruiting volunteers, especially for Region 5 Conference planning, competitions judging, and the Nominations committee. And let's not forget the recent compliments from editors at the international level who will be publishing an article about our redesigned website and an announcement about the innovative masthead of our newsletter in an upcoming issue of *Tieline* (targeting all STC leaders).

Can such participation and recognition be due to this year's theme, "Communicate Outside the Box?" A change in leadership? The new meeting location? Perhaps all or none of these explanations apply. But, regardless of the root cause, a new spirit of participation is spreading and has had a rejuvenating effect on the entire chapter. Every member who participates is helping to make us all shine brighter.

As we start the New Year off with our awards banquet on January 26, I hope the level of participation continues to grow. To paraphrase an anonymous quote, "It does not matter if you lead or follow, just participate." There are still committees that need your help, so if there is something in particular that you are interested in, speak up and let Jocelyn or me know so that we can guide you in the right direction. And, if attending the general meetings is all you have time for, please try to join us for the exciting line-up of guest speakers scheduled for the coming months. Keep an eye on our website and *Dateline Houston* announcements for details.

I am looking forward to reaching even greater heights in 2001. Please join us!

Happy New Year!

Deborah

The following members of our chapter achieved senior member status as of December 2000:

- Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary
- Alan M. Breacher
- Patrick M. Cassidy
- Carole L. Cell
- Steve Cunningham
- Kristy J. Dale
- Jamie Diamandopoulos
- Jessica L. Dickerson
- Gaynell Doehne
- Stephanie C. Donovan
- Christina L. Friloux
- Rene S. Gedaly
- Canice Goloby
- Aura L. Gromala
- Johnette Hassell
- Charles A. Kent
- Debra A. Marino
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- Kevin M. Southwick

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## December Volunteer of the Month

by Peggy Head, Contract Technical Writer, RHI Consulting

**C**ongratulations to the STC Houston volunteer of the month for December 2000, Heather Shelly.

As an information developer at BMC Software in Houston, Heather documents products that monitor and manage operating systems (primarily Unix and Windows NT). Heather's documentation deliverables include online help (primarily WinHelp) and books (hardcopy, PDF, and HTML). She also helps maintain one of several customer advocacy initiatives in the BMC Software Technical Publications department.

In addition to her professional competence, Heather's tireless volunteer efforts exemplify a standard of excellence.

A member of STC since graduating from the University of Houston—Downtown in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Professional Writing, Heather has steadily increased her donation of time and talent to our organization.

Heather has focused her attention on Recognitions committee and Competition committee activities. She was a member of the Recognition committee in 1998–1999, and she managed the committee last year.

This year Heather fulfills one of the most challenging roles as chapter director of competitions. Her initial efforts helped establish a partnership with the Twin Cities chapter, paving the way for good communication and cooperation in the swapping and judging of competition entries.

Heather has worked closely with Competitions General Manager Jeanne O'Meara to ensure that all the pieces come together (such as developing submission guidelines, recruiting/training judges, and planning the awards banquet). Heather's involvement spans several months, from the research phase that began last summer until award certificates are bestowed on the winners in January.

Heather is dedicated to the enrichment of technical communications. Next Spring she will receive a Master of Science degree in Occupation Technology (with an emphasis on Training and Development) from the University of Houston—Clear Lake.

The tenacity demonstrated in Heather's professional life and volunteer activities is proof of her ability to set and accomplish lofty goals. We are fortunate, indeed, to have her on our "team." Way to go, Heather!

## Call for Papers "2001—A Communication Odyssey"

The Willamette Valley chapter will host the STC Region 7 Conference in downtown Portland, Oregon, in October 2001. They invite you to submit proposals for sessions.

You can share with your peers some of the new technologies you've mastered, innovations you have made in your online and printed documents, or anything else of professional merit.

It's not too early to start planning your paper, presentation, workshop, or panel. The complete Call for Papers is posted on the conference web site at <http://www.region7conference.com>. Proposals are due March 1, 2001.

If you have questions or ideas, contact Program Manager Garret Romaine at [garretr@pixel-worksinc.com](mailto:garretr@pixel-worksinc.com) or Conference Chair Mark Ace at [mark@ace1.com](mailto:mark@ace1.com).

## Congrats to New Student Chapter

STC Houston congratulates the new Texas A&M student chapter (our former Bryan/College Station satellite). STC chartered the new chapter at the Fall 2000 board meeting.

The new chapter held its first meeting in December. Members also plan to launch their own Web site.

Faculty members Dr. Jackie Palmer, director of technical writing programs, and Dr. Jimmie Killingsworth, director of graduate studies, are co-managing the new Texas A&M chapter.

Corporate sponsors National Instruments (based in Austin) and the Allyn and Bacon Publishing Company have generously funded the initial memberships for the students.

For several years STC Houston has enjoyed the participation of our Bryan/College Station satellite members, and we wish them luck as they "do their own thing" in the future.

Karen Graber, the previous satellite manager, remains the contact for information about membership and activities at [graber@odpe-mail.tamu.edu](mailto:graber@odpe-mail.tamu.edu).

**Don't miss the  
STC Houston Chapter  
Awards Banquet  
on January 26, 2001!**

**See page 8 for more  
details.**



### New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy, Manager, Documentation, Aspen Technology

#### Leslie Kennedy Adams

Leslie holds a Ph.D. in English from Texas A&M University, where she taught Freshman Composition and Technical Writing.

Leslie is the director of the Writing Specialization Program at Houston Baptist University. She teaches writing and literature courses. When the opportunity arises, Leslie conducts technical writing seminars through the university's continuing education program.

#### Celeste Budwit

Celeste has worked for the corporate office of 3D/International—a company of architects, engineers, and construction managers—since January 2000.

Celeste started out as website editor, learning HTML on the job, and her position evolved into managing the marketing resources for the company. When Celeste has time, she customizes 3D/International's online project procedures manual for specific projects. She supports marketing coordinators in each office, who put together proposals. Celeste also edits white papers and articles for publication.

Before this position, Celeste was self-employed for eight years, selling and training; before that, she worked in employee benefits for six years. Celeste took her current job as a change of pace and reports that she loves it.

#### Beth Dutson

Beth specializes in writing end-user documentation and business processes for Windows and Unix client/server applications. She creates training manuals, procedures, and reference

guides that can be printed with a table of contents, tabs, and indexes and can be converted to HTML or XML with links for online help.

Beth also has experience in designing and creating Outlook forms and reports (using Word and Mail Merge).

Beth is working as a contractor for ACS, developing migration procedures for mainframe processes.

Beth has 20 years of graphic arts experience, producing user documentation, training manuals, and graphic designs. She also has experience in forms design, layout, four-color separation, varied printing disciplines, and a variety of software programs.

Beth has two daughters and five grandchildren. Her hobby is riding cutting horses.

#### Marie Nguyen

Marie recently finished her final requirements for graduation and received her degree in English with an option in Technical Communications from Eastern Washington University in December.

Marie moved to Houston in July 2000. She started a five-week internship with Dynegy in August and was asked to stay on permanently. Marie is an associate analyst in the Dynegy Technical Communications department.

Marie's main areas of interest are software and application documentation and online help.

#### Matthew Veazey

Matthew moved to Houston from Louisiana last July. In August he began working as the associate editor of *Materials Performance*, a monthly magazine produced by NACE International, the Corrosion Society, for its

members. Recently, Matthew was promoted to staff writer.

Though he is new to technical communications, Matthew has found his previous professional experience in print journalism and public relations useful because the emphasis in those fields is also to present information to the audience as concisely as possible.

Matthew spends much of his time editing technical articles, and he also writes brief news articles describing advances in the field of corrosion prevention and control. In his spare time, Matthew teaches English as a Second Language at St. John Vianney Catholic Church in West Houston.

Matthew has a bachelors degree in English from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a masters degree in Mass Communications from Louisiana State University.

#### Gordon Wood

Gordon recently retired from BP Amoco, where he served in positions ranging from manager of a technology group to human resources/technology liaison. His 23-year tenure in industry included field work in more than 40 countries.

At BP Amoco, Gordon's positions required writing press releases, newsletter articles, and collateral marketing materials (brochures, manuals, and trade-show displays).

Gordon is now a technical writer and editor at the ExxonMobil Production Upstream Central Technology Organization.

Gordon has a Ph.D. in Geology and has written more than 120 publications for peer-reviewed geological and biological journals.



# Region 5 Director-Sponsor Report: Leaders Light the Way Together, Everyone Achieves More!

by Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

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The team concept is very powerful because, when team members work together for the good of all, everyone achieves more. Here are some of the positive aspects of teamwork.

## Goal-oriented focus

The highest priority for team members is achieving the team's goals. A team may have members who possess strong personalities and highly specialized skills and who commit themselves to a variety of personal objectives—but the most important thing is the success of the group.

For a team to function effectively, its members must be flexible, trust one another, and wholeheartedly support every member of the group in its progress toward achieving its goals.

## Collaboration

The collaboration of team members can be a big benefit, producing better results than any team member alone. People want to work well together and support one another when they identify with the team. They want the team to shine and be successful.

Individual competitiveness is reduced. For the sake of the team, people want to do more than cooperate with one another. They collaborate; they willingly invest themselves in the team effort.

## Communication

When people have learned to support and trust one another, they share what they know freely. They realize how important it is to the team to pass on the information that members need to operate more effectively. Information flows freely

up, down, and sideways; so communication becomes another benefit.

There can't be collaboration and support in a group without communication. The way people communicate—in words and nonverbal clues—not only reflects how they feel about working with one another, but it also builds (or detracts from) the team's effectiveness.

Good communication gives clear messages that are conducive to people working productively and without misunderstandings.

## Better use of resources

There is a more efficient application of resources, talents, and strengths, because people are applying them willingly and sharing them with other members of the team.

Whenever one member of a team lacks certain knowledge or competence, another is there to fill the gap.

## Better decisions

Decisions and solutions are made simultaneously with everyone generating and evaluating more options. Those decisions are made by consensus, which means they are usually better than what even the brightest person in the group could come up with alone.

## Higher commitment

People who are responsible for decisions and solutions own them, so they feel committed to carrying them out successfully. These team members feel a strong commitment not to let the team down.

## Quality

There is more concern for achieving quality and accuracy, because employees feel they are part of a team effort. They want to make the team look as good as possible.

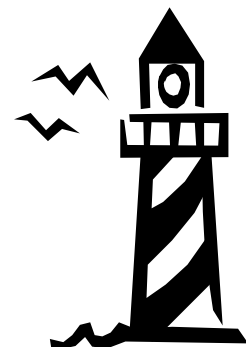
In addition, because team members work collaboratively, they ensure that each member gets what he or she needs from the team to turn out the best possible work.

## Problem resolution

As people on a team learn to take other members at face value, they build trust and credibility.

Disagreements that affect certain team members become issues for the entire group to deal with, because those disagreements can affect the working of the entire team. Team members, therefore, don't have to resolve differences on their own. The whole team pitches in to help.

That we work well in a team environment is more important today than ever before. I hope this article reminds you of the important benefits of teamwork in every aspect of our lives.



## Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Time	Event/Topic	Location	Contact
<b>Jan. 26</b>	6:30 p.m.	Awards Banquet	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Heather Shelly heather_shelly@bmc.com
<b>Feb. 1</b>	EBD*	deadline for March newsletter		Rhonda Hector rhonda@newmc.cc
<b>Feb. 13</b>	6:30 p.m.	General Meeting Speaker: Andrea Ames	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Dorothy Murray dorothy_murray@email.msn.net
<b>Feb. 13</b>	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston admin council meeting	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Deborah Long deborah.long@enron.com.
<b>Feb. 19</b>	6:30 p.m.– 7:30 p.m.	Online Documentation SIG meeting	HAL-PC Headquarters 4543 Post Oak Place Drive, Suite 200	Larry Dybala lwd@hal-pc.org

\*End of business day

**Please note:** Because of the awards banquet, there is *no general meeting in January*. See you at the awards banquet!

**January 26, 2001**

**Houston Chapter Awards Banquet**

The 2000–2001 Technical Publications, Art and Online Communications Awards banquet will be held on January 26, 2001. This annual banquet honors our colleagues who won awards during the season’s competitions, and allows members to view the winning entries, which are showcased at the event.

From 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., attendees can view the awards while enjoying the hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar. The banquet and awards presentation takes place from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

We hope to see you there!

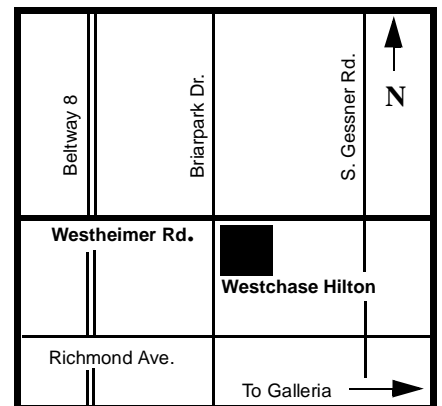
There is no general meeting in January 2001. General meetings will resume on February 13, 2001.



**Meeting Basics**

**Place:**

Westchase Hilton Hotel  
9999 Westheimer Road  
(at Briarpark, between  
S. Gessner and Beltway 8)



**Date:**

January 26, 2001

**Time:**

6:30–7:45 p.m. Exhibits,  
networking and cash bar  
8:00–9:00 p.m. Dinner  
9:00–10:30 p.m. Program

**Cost:**

\$35 per person