

Dateline Houston

Volume 41, Issue 2

Designing the future of technical communication

October 2001

So Much to Learn, So Little Time

by Kate Compton, Help Developer, Questia Media, Inc.

We are proud to be hosting speakers from all parts of Region 5, and some outside the region, for our conference this month.

The conference will offer information in six key areas: Consulting, Graphics, Management, Technical, Usability, and Writing & Editing. Check out session details on the conference web site, www.stc-houston.org/r5conference/r5programs.htm.

The conference begins on Friday with a keynote address by Dr. John Lienhard, M.D. Anderson Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering and History at the University of Houston.

Dr. Lienhard is the author and host of the syndicated radio show, *Engines of Our Ingenuity*. His short radio pieces are always informative and interesting; his full-length keynote address should prove to be no less than riveting.

Learn more about Dr. Lienhard and his presentation plans at www.stc-houston.org/r5conference/r5keynote.htm.

We'll have two full days of sessions with topics as varied and dynamic as our profession itself. It might take some serious consideration to decide which sessions you'd like to attend. You can check out the schedule and read the session titles in the Region 5 Conference Schedule on page 8.

Round out your conference experience with one of two workshops on Thursday afternoon and a leadership workshop on Sunday morning. To learn more about the pre-conference and post-conference workshops, go to www.stc-houston.org/r5conference/r5prepost.htm.

Start making your conference choices now to ensure that you get the most out of your experience. We look forward to seeing you there!

Getting Around the Region 5 Conference

So you've registered for the Region 5 Conference. You're all ready to go. But where? To the Houston Hilton Westchase and Towers Hotel, at 9999 Westheimer Road, that's where!

The hotel is located at the intersection of Briarpark and Westheimer, just east

of Beltway 8. When you arrive, park at the back of the hotel and come in to the Omni Foyer.

You can pick up your registration packet on Thursday (11 a.m.–1 p.m. and 5–8 p.m.), Friday (7–8:30 a.m. and 5–8 p.m.), or Saturday (7–8:30 a.m.). Registration and hospitality tables will be in the Omni Foyer.

Conference sessions will be held in the Omni Ballroom ABC, the Westwind room, the Westchase room, and Conference Rooms A and C.

continued on page 3

In This Issue

From the President	2
From the Planning Director	3
Volunteer of the Month.....	4
New Member News	5
Chapter Competitions	6
Director-Sponsor Report.....	7
Conference Schedule	8
Conference Location.....	9
Calendar of Events.....	9

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 Sloan
Layout Editor: David C. Pacheco
Coordinating Editor: Lisa Muenchow
Story Editors: Melanie Boston, Jim Hunt, and Jamie Diamandopoulos
Staff Writer: Lisetta Lavy

Administrative Council

President, George Slaughter
George_Slaughter@bmc.com

Vice President, Dorothy Murray
Dorothy_Murray@email.msn.com

Treasurer, Wayne Schmadeka
Wayne_Schmadeka@bmc.com

Secretary, Sahar Othman
saharo@netzero.net

Past President, Deborah Long
deborah@longcommunications.net

Director of Communications,
April Cooper
april_c_cooper@yahoo.com

Director of Competitions,
Suzanne Stuckly-Taboada
Suzanne_Stuckly-Taboada@bmc.com

Director of Memberhip, Linda Oestreich
Linda_Oestreich@bmc.com

Director of Planning, Ron Kirk
rkirk@wt.net

Director of Programs, Paul Mueller
answersforall@pobox.com

Director of Satellites, Heather Shelly
Heather_Shelly@bmc.com

Director of Volunteer Resources,
Mary Gwynne
Mary_Gwynne@bmc.com

STC Houston
P.O. Box 42051
Houston, TX 77242-2051
713-595-2100 x8803
www.stc-houston.org
www.stc.org

From the President STC Houston Exemplifies the Power of Community

by George Slaughter, Information Developer, BMC Software

First things first: Welcome, everyone, to the 2001 STC Region 5 Conference! We know you will enjoy your time with us in Houston.

The Power of Community

Nicole Wycislo, who has done a great job as conference manager, likes to talk about what she calls *the power of community*. What she has said to us in Houston many times bears repeating here as we enjoy the time that we spend together.

In essence, all you need to succeed—knowledge, skills, contacts—is in front of you. You are surrounded, as you are a part of the community. Everything you could ever want is here in your community. It's up to you to reach out and create those partnerships for success. Do so here!

Mistresses of Fun and Other Grand Poobahs

Please take a moment to meet the people who made this conference a reality for you.

Thanks to Dorothy Murray, arrangements; Jeff Staples, corporate sponsors; Deborah Silvi, finance; and to Cindy Pao and her Mistresses of Fun for hospitality (they're the ones in the sunglasses).

Thanks also to Paul Mueller and Linda Oestreich, programs; Melanie G. Flanders, shirts and other promotional items; Rebecca Taylor, publications; Kate Compton, publicity; and Susan Stotzer and Robin Scott, registration.

Suzanna Laurent, our Region 5 director-sponsor, served as our volunteer liaison. Suzanna has been a blessing to STC Houston, and we thank her—again. STC President Judy Glick-Smith also honors us with her presence; we're glad to welcome them both. If you've not met these two remarkable people, do so!

Former Planning Director Jim Hunt and current director Ron Kirk provided ideas, insight, and oversight.

And an Engine of Our Ingenuity, Too

In closing, thanks to Dr. John Lienhard of the University of Houston for being our keynote speaker. He honors us by sharing his insights.

Enjoy the conference!



George Slaughter



From the Planning Director

2001 Region 5 Conference and Long-Term Planning

by Ron Kirk, retired technical writer

October 2001 is a time of celebration for STC Houston. The planning and hard work of many volunteers has culminated in the Region 5 Conference.

Conferences don't just happen! They are the result of many hours of planning, meetings, and management, plus endless hours of just plain hard work.

I started my service as planning director in August, well after the hard work on the Region 5 Conference was underway (in fact, it was almost completed). I have had the honor to observe the Region 5 Conference Steering Committee in action; the members are dedicated to making this conference the best it can be.

I want to thank Jim Hunt, the past planning director, for his assistance with the transition and his help with the Region 5 Conference, and I want to take this opportunity to thank each committee member for their contributions.

Region 5 Conference Committee

Coordinator:	Nicole Wycislo
Arrangements:	Dorothy Murray
Corporate Sponsors:	Jeff Staples
Finance:	Deborah Silvi
Hospitality:	Cindy Pao
Programs:	Linda Oestreich Paul Mueller
Publications	Rebecca Taylor
Publicity:	Kate Compton
Registration:	Susan Stotzer Robin Scott
Volunteers:	Suzanna Laurent

As you enjoy the conference, keep in mind the folks that made it happen for you. When you see one of the committee members, thank them for putting together a great conference.

Strategic Planning

As we move through the year, it is necessary that we have a plan in place to guide us. I have recruited Mark

Stepp as the Strategic Planning Committee manager. Mark has vast experience in strategic planning. Mark has been a technical writer in Houston for 11 years.

Together with our president, George Slaughter, Mark and I will review the existing five-year plan. Mark will recruit his committee members and then make recommendations for the next five-year plan. If you have any ideas or suggestions about strategic planning, please contact Mark at markstepp@email.com or me at rkirk@wt.net. A good five-year plan is our roadmap to having a successful STC chapter in the future.

Strategic planning will address, but is not limited to, the following initiatives:

- community involvement
- membership drives
- mentoring and coaching training
- mentoring and coaching programs

Join us as we plan for the future!

So Much to Learn, So Little Time

continued from page 1

The conference Opening Reception takes place from 7–9 p.m. Thursday, October 11, in the Westwind room. Enjoy the menu of Southwestern-style appetizers, a mariachi band, and icebreaker games. Bring your lucky charms with you so that you'll win some prizes. But whatever you do, stay until the end, or you'll miss the surprise conclusion!

During the conference, take advantage of the book sale and corporate sponsor tables in the Omni Foyer. In Omni

Ballroom A, STC International Technical Publications competitions Best of Show winners will be on display, as well as a resume table for job hunters and hirers. Drop off your entry with representatives of the STC Houston Technical Publications, Art, and Online Competitions as well.

Lunch on Friday and Saturday, included with your registration, will be held in Omni Ballroom ABC.



Jeff Staples, October Volunteer of the Month

by Deborah Silvi, Technical Publications Manager, BMC Software

Jeff Staples is the STC Houston Volunteer of the Month for October.

At his day job, Jeff is an information developer at BMC Software. In his STC Houston role, Jeff is a senior member who serves the Region 5 Conference Steering Committee as corporate sponsor manager.

Jeff has approached many prospective corporate sponsors throughout the Greater Houston area and elsewhere to secure their support for the conference.

Thanks to Jeff, STC Houston has raised thousands of dollars and material donations to offset the costs of the conference, making the event more affordable and enjoyable for everyone.

Jeff has served STC Houston in a number of roles, including publications manager with the Region 5 Conference in Houston in 1994.

Jeff was the managing editor of *Dateline Houston* for the 1995–1996 program year. Jeff and his newsletter team won the STC newsletter Merit Award for chapters with 300 or more members.

Thanks to Jeff, STC Houston has raised thousands of dollars to offset the costs of the conference, making the event more affordable for everyone.

Jeff later served as chapter competitions general manager, chapter vice president, and chapter president.

During his tenure as president (1996–1997), Jeff led STC Houston to a

Chapter Achievement award, the fifth in chapter history.

“One of the most heartening things you see as chapter president is former presidents returning to participate,” says STC Houston President George Slaughter.

“Jeff has been a real leader with the Region 5 Conference Steering Committee, and his efforts have made a difference. Moreover, he’s provided a voice of encouragement to the current chapter leaders.

“It’s always good to get the perspective of someone who’s walked in your shoes.”

Jeff has also been active at the Society level. He manages the STC Marketing Communications committee.

STC Houston is pleased to honor Jeff Staples as its October Volunteer of the Month.

STC Houston Sets November Program Meeting

Representatives from eHelp Corporation, the maker of RoboHelp and RoboInfo, will make a presentation on developing Help systems at STC Houston’s November Program Meeting.

The meeting is set for Tuesday, November 13, at the Hilton Houston Westchase and Towers, 9999 Westheimer.

Meeting costs are \$10 for members, \$13 for non-members, \$3 for student members and unemployed members, and \$6 for student non-members.

Call Disc Inc

- Data Conversions
- Multi-Platform Disc, Cartridge, Tape
- OCR/PDF Scanning & Imaging
- Electronic Creation of MultiMedia, Catalogs, Manuals, Sales, Marketing and Training Materials
- CD/DVD Media Duplication and Distribution
- Business Card CDs

THE HOUSTON 100

Disc Inc can convert electronic files!

We see eye-to-eye on all your information needs

Since 1982

713.864.7845
www.dlscinc.com
Fax 713.864.7849
6767 Portwest Drive
Suite 100
Houston TX 77024-8083

disc inc

Our Chapter's Continued Achievement

by Deborah Long, Strategic Communications, Enron Net Works

Jocelyn Williams, our assistant to the president, is the contact person for information and submissions pertaining to the 2001–2002 Chapter Achievement Award. Not only are chapter-wide activities important, but so are individual accomplishments of our members.

Rather than wait until the end of the year, keep Jocelyn posted on a real-time basis by e-mail at

Jocelyn_Williams@bmc.com or by telephone at 713-918-2489.

Here is a partial list of technical communication activities that can earn

us points when we enter the competition:

- presentations at meetings
- judging for competitions
- mentoring students
- participating in academic programs (job fairs, etc.)
- publishing articles in technical journals
- serving at the Society level (committee chair, etc.)

For more information, go to the Society web site (**www.stc.org**) and read the Chapter Achievement Award guidelines. Thanks for your participation!

New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy, Manager, Documentation, Aspen Technology

Cord Courrege

Cord Courrege is a student member studying at Louisiana State University; he will graduate December 2001. Cord has been in the communications industry since 1998 as the owner of Page Engine Web Solutions, a Dallas-based company, and has been developing web sites, consulting, and producing technical documents. He has published several items and recently received an Award of Merit from STC Austin's 12th Annual Student Writing Contest. Cord is webmaster for the STC Louisiana Satellite Chapter. After graduation, he plans on a future in technical writing.

Keith Danielson

Keith Danielson is president and founder of Applied GFX, Inc., which provides 3D graphics and animation services to technical and engineering clients. Before consulting, Keith worked for five years as a training designer at NASA's Johnson Space Center and worked for five years in the

Houston area as an independent multimedia/web-based training consultant.

Debora Fisher

Debora Fisher has worked in the publishing industry for more than 20 years. She works for Compaq Computer Corporation, where she is a graphic production supervisor. Debora has been at Compaq for four years. Her area of expertise is in graphic design and production. She has lived in Houston for 21 years.

Terri Knighton

Terri Knighton is a technical writer in the Corporate Training Group with Waste Management. She has been in the communications field one year, after working 12 years as an administrative assistant. Terri enjoys her job, which includes the design and development of training materials and user manuals. She is pursuing a degree with a major in e-business. Terri has lived in Houston for 27 years.

Call for Proposals

by Kate Mertes, VP/PE, American Society of Indexers

The American Society of Indexers is hosting its 34th annual conference May 16–19, 2002, at Moody Gardens in Galveston.

The American Society of Indexers is a national membership organization that promotes excellence in indexing. Our technological society confronts us with chaotic and unorganized information. Professional indexers use creative intellectual analysis to provide efficient tools—indexes in many shapes and forms—to allow seekers to access this information and turn it into knowledge.

ASI conferences are well-attended and aim to provide a broad range and depth of information. ASI is looking for topics of interest to indexers and information specialists of all kinds and levels of expertise, from beginners to veterans. In addition, this year ASI will be offering an editorial track, aimed at indexers and editors, to further our appreciation and understanding of each other's work.

The deadline for submissions is November 1. For more information about possible topics, what to include in your proposal, and publication of conference proceedings, check our web site at **www.asindexing.org** and click on "annual meetings," or contact Kate Mertes, VP/PE of ASI (118 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314; **kmertes@hotmail.com**; 703-549-4574).

Tips in MS Word:

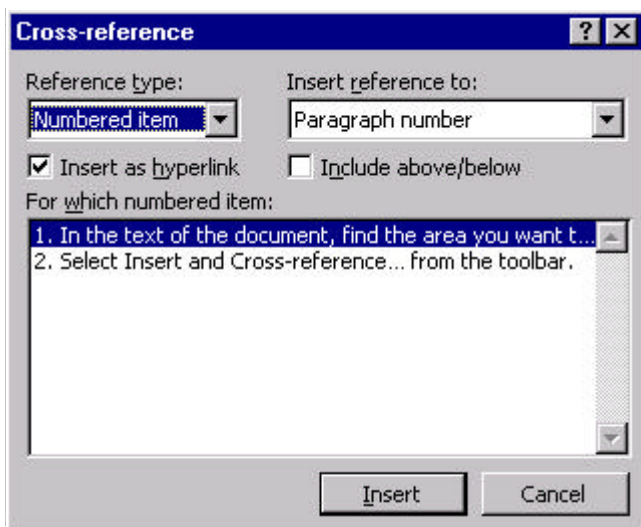
Labeling Figures and Tables with Captions—Part II

By Gary Michael Smith, Senior Documentation Specialist, CACI

Last month I demonstrated how to create captions for figures and tables. This month I explain how to create and update in-text links to the captions.

Creating an In-Text Link to a Figure or Table

1. In your document, place the cursor where you want to create the in-text link.
2. From the toolbar, select **I**nsert, then **C**ross-reference. The following window is displayed:



3. In the **Reference type** field, select **Figure** or **Table**. All figures and tables that have been linked are displayed in the **For which numbered item** field.
4. In the **Insert reference to** field, select **Entire caption**. The words *figure* or *table*, the chapter number, and the image number are displayed in the link. (**Note:** You may have to insert an em dash manually. Do not delete or retype the chapter or image number. If either of these numbers is retyped, the link may be broken.)
5. Ensure that **Insert as hyperlink** is checked.
6. In the **For which numbered item** field, select the appropriate title and click **I**nsert. The caption is displayed in the document as a link.

Updating an In-Text Link

1. Place your cursor to the left or right of the in-text link. Highlight the caption text.
2. Press **F9**. The in-text link to the figure or table caption is updated to reflect the actual caption.

Gary Michael Smith is a senior documentation specialist with CACI at the Information Technology Center in New Orleans. You can contact him at gsmith@comm.net.

STC Houston Competitions Are Underway

by Erika Frensley, Lead Information Developer, BMC Software

The STC Houston chapter competitions are now in progress. Submit your work to be judged and recognized by fellow communicators. You can submit your work for the following competitions:

- Online Communication Competition
- Technical Art Competition (physical media only)
- Technical Publications Competition

Anyone can submit entries. You do not have to be a member of STC. You may enter work for yourself or for a colleague or subordinate. Entries must have been produced or substantially revised within 24 months preceding September 1 of the current year. Entries must have been

originally prepared for and accepted for publication by a client, employer, or publisher.

The deadline for all STC Houston chapter competitions is October 19.

You can register your entries online at www.stc-houston.org/competitions.html, or print the Call for Entries entry forms from our web site and send it to us at:

STC Houston
Attention: Competitions
P.O. Box 42051
Houston, TX 77242-2051

For more information, contact Erika Frensley at 713-918-1340 or erika_frensley@bmc.com.

Planning a Successful Chapter Year

by J. Suzanna Laurent, Director-Sponsor, Region 5

Members of STC know that leaders are a lot like eagles: they don't flock, and you usually find them one at a time. By accepting a position of responsibility in your chapter, you will have already made an important step toward learning to soar like an eagle!

STC offers members many opportunities to practice and improve leadership skills. Whether you are guiding the chapter as an officer, serving as a committee manager, or participating in another way, you can make a difference this year.

I encourage you to use this opportunity to sharpen your leadership, time management, and organizational skills. You will find it rewarding—personally and professionally—and the experience will shine through on the job and on your resume.

A successful chapter year is the result of setting goals and developing plans for achieving them. By now I hope your chapter goals and programs are clearly defined for the coming year—if not, you need to start planning right away. Your chapter's strategic plan may dictate many of your activities, and that is as it should be. Even if you have a strategic plan, it is always helpful to analyze how well the chapter is meeting the members' needs and interests and gather ideas for

improving chapter management, programs, and activities.

As you plan, remember that good leaders are not restricted by the way things "have always been done." Their leadership is a continuing search for the best way to do things, not necessarily the most familiar way.

Here are some steps for developing chapter goals and planning activities to achieve them. Regardless of the circumstances, following these steps during the planning stage can help everyone achieve more.

- **Goals**—Decide what you want to accomplish this year. Ideas gathered from a member survey can help you plan activities to strengthen the whole chapter or specific areas.
- **Functions**—Decide who is responsible for achieving each goal. Is there a specific committee or member who will handle this responsibility? Discuss the goals and their achievement with those responsible for them.
- **Activities**—Discuss activities that will help you reach the goals. What has been done in the past that should continue? What can be done that is new? Then, develop a list of activities to help achieve the goal. You may be able to choose these

activities from the Chapter Achievement Award guidelines—they are designed to help strengthen your chapter. If necessary, submit your list to the chapter or Administrative Council for approval.



Suzanna Laurent

- **Action plan**—When will you do these activities? Once the activities are finalized, put them on your chapter calendar and set a specific date for their completion.
- **Celebrate**—Don't forget to celebrate your victories and give plenty of recognition along the way!

The most successful leaders are the ones who recognize the creative potential of the people on their teams and use that potential wisely. You are the "leaders who light the way"—those in roles such as mentors, officers, and committee or project managers. You make a tremendous difference to the Society and its members, and I enthusiastically thank you for your contributions to STC!

Congratulations to New STC Senior Members

According to the *STC Bylaws*, the grade of senior member is conferred upon those who have held the grade of member in STC for five years.

Senior members receive certificates from the Society naming them as senior members.

STC and STC Houston are pleased to recognize the following local members as senior members:

- Fred A. Bennatt
- Pamela J. Breig
- Julie H. Davidson
- Jessie de Jong
- Ora A. Gibson
- Michael W. Gos
- Betty R. Haley
- Dorothy R. Murray
- Cynthia J. Ramirez
- Alfred Watkins

Region 5 Conference Schedule

Friday, October 12, 2001

7:30 – 8:30	Continental Breakfast			
8:30 – 10:00	Keynote: Inventing Ourselves: Frankenstein, Faust, and Pygmalion			
10:30 – Noon	Trends in Software and Hardware Documentation	Evaluating Index Usability	Yesterday, API Was Just Another Acronym, Today I Have to Document One	The Newly Promoted Team Leader: Shifting Focus from Products to People AND Innovative Project Management—Exploding the Myths of Cost, Quality, and Speed
Noon	Lunch			
1:30 – 3:00	Just What They Need, Just When They Need It: An Introduction to Embedded Assistance	Web Writing ABCs	Your Qs, Their As: Improving Interviewing Skills	A Non-Management Career Path for Technical Writers
3:30 – 5:00	Intro to JavaScript for Writers		What's in a Name? Applying Principles of Language to the Design of User Interface	Designing and Implementing Distance Learning

Saturday, October 13, 2001

7:30 – 8:30	Continental Breakfast			
8:30 – 10:00	Usability on a Shoestring	Writing Procedure Topics	A Web-Based Interactive Installation Guide	Getting Your Non-Fiction Book Published AND Self-Publishing Quickly and Affordably
10:30 – Noon			A Primer on 3D Graphics and Animation for Technical Communication	Starting and Growing a Business
Noon	Lunch			
1:30 – 3:00	It's All About Content	Life and Career Planning	From Desktop to Palmtop: Creating Usable Online Documents for Wireless and Handheld Devices	Improve Your Graphics: Communicate with Your Illustrator! AND Hidden Humanity: Technical Illustration in Accident Reports
3:30 – 5:00	What Does Single-Sourcing Mean for Writers?		Dangers of Personalization	Hidden Skeletons in the Closets of Your Documents: The Sentence Diagram AND Editing Checklists: How to Make Sure You Haven't Forgotten Anything

Region 5 Conference

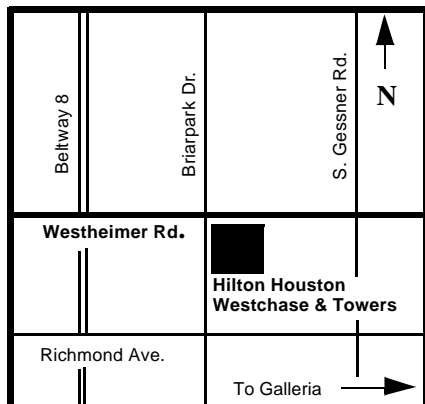
Invention, Innovation, Ingenuity

STC Houston is proud to host the Region 5 Conference. The program has a great variety of topics. The keynote speaker is Dr. John Lienhard, famed for his *Engines of Our Ingenuity* radio shows on KUHF.

Come to the conference to learn new skills and to speak with technical communicators from across the country.

Place:

Hilton Houston Westchase and Towers
(at Briarpark, between S. Gessner and Beltway 8)



Date:

October 11-13

Time:

8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. program

In Memoriam

Jim J. Walsh, STC Houston Volunteer of the Month for September, died September 13 after a long illness. He was 66.

“Jim Walsh served our chapter with distinction,” STC Houston President George Slaughter says. “Jim was a sweetheart of a human being. He served as our chapter treasurer for several years, and he brought good judgement and a spirit of generosity to STC Houston. He will be missed.”

Jim was a 28-year veteran of Texas Instruments. He is survived by his wife Ele and their three sons.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Time	Event/Topic	Location	Contact
Oct. 11	7:00 p.m.	STC Region 5 Conference Opening Reception	Hilton Houston Westchase & Towers 9999 Westheimer Road	Nicole Wycislo nicole@verb1.com
Oct. 12-13	All Day	STC Region 5 Conference	Hilton Houston Westchase & Towers 9999 Westheimer Road	Nicole Wycislo nicole@verb1.com
Oct. 16	6:00 p.m.	Administrative Council meeting	Kitba Consulting Services 2900 Wilcrest, Suite 270	George Slaughter gslaughter@flex.net
Oct. 25	EBD*	deadline for December newsletter	N/A	Rhonda Sloan rhonda@newmc.cc
Nov. 25	EBD*	deadline for January newsletter	N/A	April Cooper april_c_cooper@yahoo.com

*end of business day

Copyright

Dateline Houston invites writers to submit articles for publication. **Note:** By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission.

Copyright is held by the author. In your

cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Reprint Policy

Dateline Houston may grant permission for articles to be reprinted in STC and non-STC publications.

Submissions

Newsletter contributions are due by the 25th of each month in Microsoft Word or FrameMaker 5.x format. All submissions are subject to editing. Send submissions to Rhonda Sloan: rhonda@newmc.cc.