

Dateline Houston

Volume 41, Issue 8

Designing the future of technical communication

April 2002

Mentoring in Technical Communication

by Bruce Garrett, Project Manager, Corporate Diagnostics Group, Compaq Computer Corporation

Mentoring is the process of advising in one's area of expertise, skills, or profession. The dictionary defines a mentor as a "wise, loyal adviser." In the profession of technical writing, mentoring is an excellent way for the experienced technical communicator to share his or her knowledge and skills with someone who has less experience or someone brand new to the profession. This article summarizes Compaq's mentoring program and how we applied it to technical communication.

Compaq Computer Corporation started their mentoring program about four years ago. The employees who participate can come from similar job functions or be from different areas of expertise (I work outside of the technical writing profession). They are allowed to meet on a regular basis for six months or longer. The meetings are informal and can occur on a monthly, biweekly, or even weekly basis. The meetings allow the mentor to answer questions, give advice, share knowledge, and discuss different aspects of the job to help the person get a better understanding.

My mentor and I met over a period of one year, on a biweekly basis. Each meeting lasted one hour and was held during lunch or in the mentor's office. During our meetings, we discussed the roles and responsibilities of a technical writer and how they applied to various technical writing jobs. There were times our workload required us to reschedule the meeting or postpone for a week or more. Flexibility in our meeting time and location allowed the meetings to be more relaxed and enjoyable—we knew we were not under pressure to get any tasks done by a deadline.

My mentor helped me in the following ways:

- Was willing to answer any question, no matter how simple or basic the question was.
- Took adequate time to discuss a concept or principle. We spent many meetings discussing only one topic or getting just one or two questions answered. We also discussed the same topic at more than one meeting.

- Pulled from other knowledgeable people in the profession to let me get other's perspectives. My mentor arranged for me to speak with some other technical writers.

My mentor made some assignments that helped me learn outside of our meetings, too. Here are the assignments, some of which were based on my own specific interests:

- Speak with other employees about working from home and telecommuting:

I spoke with two people who were doing a telecommuting job for Compaq. They gave me pros and cons of doing that type of work.

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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: Rebecca Taylor

Layout Editor: David C. Pacheco

Coordinating Editor: Cathy Bettoney

Story Editors: Melanie Boston, Jamie Diamandopoulos, and Jim Hunt

Staff Writer: Lisetta Lavy

Administrative Council

President, George Slaughter
gslaughter@flex.net

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
aprilcooper@houston.rr.com

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

Director of Membership, 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
PO Box 42051
Houston TX 77242-2051
713-595-2100 ext 8803
www.stc-houston.org

www.stc.org

From the President Soaring Satellites

by George Slaughter, Information Developer, BMC Software

You know from last month's newsletter that Karen Graber of our Bryan-College Station satellite and Marilyn Barrett O'Leary of our Louisiana satellite were named as two of our recipients of the Distinguished Chapter Service Award. This month we'd like to share with you some of the good things that their satellite groups have done for STC.

Louisiana Satellite

As Heather Shelly, STC Houston director of satellites, can attest, the Louisiana satellite has many active STC volunteers.

On April 20, the Louisiana satellite will host a workshop on writing for the web. Pulitzer Prize-winning writer James O'Byrne of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* will be the keynote speaker, and state Senator Mike Michot will speak about the coming technology revolution in Louisiana.

Marilyn and her colleagues, including Steve Brunet, Cord Courrege, Julie Herbert, Nina Laidlaw, and Gaye Farris, have put much effort into planning what promises to be an exciting event.

The workshop will be held at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center in Baton Rouge. You can learn more about the Louisiana workshop by visiting the Louisiana satellite page of the STC Houston web site. The URL is www.stc-houston.org/~stcla/index.html.

Bryan-College Station Satellite

Karen, meanwhile, has been active in leading the Bryan-College Station satellite. In recent years the satellite has been active in a number of activities, perhaps most conspicuously a resume-writing workshop in which many STC Houston members made the trip to College Station to help review resumes. Karen and her team have recently reached out to work with the new Texas A&M University student chapter.

All too often, when we think of STC Houston activities, we focus strictly on what we see in Houston. But STC Houston is more than the Greater Houston area, and our colleagues in Louisiana and Bryan-College Station are very much a part of the STC Houston family.



George Slaughter



Volunteers of the Month

Rene Gedaly, Jessica Dickerson, and Dean Liscum

by Dorothy Murray, Senior Writer and Editor, Bergan et al., inc.

We are honoring Rene Gedaly, Jessica Dickerson, and Dean Liscum as STC Houston Volunteers of the Month for April. As committee chairs for the local annual competitions, they organized the judging that made the 2002 awards banquet interesting. Rene, Jessica, and Dean recruited judges, compiled and distributed packets containing the entries and judging forms, collected the judged entries, and tabulated the results. Rene, Jessica, and Dean worked individually with new judges to explain the procedure, because the judging workshop was not held this year—many volunteers were tired from intense participation in the STC Region 5 Conference or had judging experience from past competitions. Rene, Jessica, and Dean also traveled to Bryan-College Station to collect entries so that our satellite/student chapter could participate in the competition.

Rene Gedaly

Rene Gedaly, the art competition chairwoman, has a B.S. degree in mathematics from the University of Houston. She had electronics training in the U.S. Army and worked as a geophysicist. Rene is currently an information developer for BMC Software, Inc.

They organized the judging that made the 2002 awards banquet interesting

Jessica Dickerson

Jessica Dickerson, the technical publications competition chairwoman, has a B.S. degree in physical science from the University of Houston. She trained astronauts to perform

experiments for the NASA Cardiovascular Laboratory during space flights; she also performed medical experiments on astronauts before and after space flights. Jessica is currently the Program Manager for Recovery products at BMC Software, Inc.

Dean Liscum

Dean Liscum, the online competition chairman, has a B.A. degree in English literature with minors in philosophy and mathematics from the University of Houston. Before he was a technical writer, Dean had a brief career as a water-tower painter. He currently works as lead information developer for BMC Software, Inc.

Mentoring in Technical Communication

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- Speak with someone about working for a documentation company:
I spoke with a lead writer who worked for a documentation company doing work at the Compaq campus.
- Work with Adobe Acrobat by working in the graphics group at Compaq.
I learned about PDF files and Acrobat when I met with the manager of the graphics department. I also worked with one of the writers in the group and did some basic assignments from my mentor and the writer in the graphics department.

- Read portions of the book *Managing Your Documentation Projects*, by JoAnn Hackos.
- Generate a writing portfolio:
I collected some technical articles I had generated in my current job and took a 3-day technical writing class on campus, where I got to use them in some class assignments.
- Answer a written list of questions that summarized all that we discussed during our meetings over the year (final exam!):
After I finished the questions over the next few weeks, we reviewed and corrected them during our last few meetings.

We both enjoyed participating in the program. I look back on it as a great learning experience. We also developed a good friendship. Whether your company has a formal mentoring program or not, you can apply these principles to a relationship with someone that you admire and believe can help you, or with someone who wants your help. I encourage those of you with good experience in the profession to mentor a coworker—either informally or as part of a company's mentoring program. It's an experience that will enrich both of you.

Are You a Big Bird Supporter

by Candie McKee, Senior Member, Oklahoma Chapter

Across America, elementary students are taught the art and science of voting. In traditional mock elementary elections, the statistics state that these children choose the person their parents choose. In another mock election, the students have to choose between Cookie Monster, who will give everyone a cookie for voting for him, and the Count, who will seek ways to solve problems. Most often Cookie Monster wins the elections. But the lesson to be learned from this lies much deeper in the exercise.

With Cookie Monster as their class president, all class problems are answered with a cookie. Soon students realize Cookie Monster isn't capable of solving any problem they have. The grumbling begins. "Cookie Monster is bad at this." "Cookie Monster is bad at that." The students who voted for the Count protest with "Don't look at me. I didn't vote for him." And those who didn't vote, because they really liked Big Bird and he wasn't an option or because they just didn't care, soon wish they had voted anyway. They discover the hard way that by not voting they cast a "yes" vote.

So what's the lesson here for adults? The same one really. The mock election teaches students to exercise their power through voting. Granted, as adults we immediately see that Cookie Monster isn't the best monster for the job; however, in real elections adults are often guilty of the same voting habits as the elementary students.

STC statistics show that most of our members must be Big Bird supporters. Chapter elections indicate that only a small percent of us vote. What does this mean? If you look at voting statistics and habits, they indicate that

members aren't voting because they don't care for the candidates; or know enough about them to make an educated selection; or they just don't care about the elections.

Watch the Techwrl mailing list for a day or so and you'll see that a lot of people involved in STC would like to see a range of things change—from chapter programs to grant guidelines. While this isn't an STC-sponsored mailing list, important information can be derived from it. Obviously STC members care. However, when asked what they want to do about it, the person usually says nothing because they think what they say doesn't matter anyway—that their vote doesn't count. Across history people have used this reason for not voting; however, history demonstrates that one vote made the difference on more than one occasion:

- In 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England.

- In 1776, one vote gave America the English language instead of German.
- In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler leadership of the Nazi Party.
- In 1960, Richard Nixon lost the presidential election (and John F. Kennedy won it) by a margin of less than one vote per precinct.

If the person who cast the deciding vote hadn't voted, what would have happened?

Martin Luther King said, "Voting is more than a badge of citizenship and dignity. It's a tool for change." So cast your vote and make a difference in STC this year. Don't be a Big Bird supporter. Make the changes you want to see happen. Make this society what you want it to be. Make it *beat* your expectations. Only you have that power.

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STC Mission Statement

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

From the Editor

Lonely Inbox ISO Member Feedback

by Rebecca Taylor, Product Marketing Analyst, Compaq Computer Corporation

I was saddened to discover recently that my Inbox is suffering from loneliness. You see, Inbox is accustomed to receiving at least a few messages now and then from *Dateline Houston* readers. However, lately Inbox has wondered if he has bad breath or an outdated sense of style, because he's been empty for almost two months. That's right! Inbox's self esteem is starting to suffer, and I have watched helplessly as he plunges into the darkness of despair.

But I cannot watch a friend suffer in silence! I need your help to rescue Inbox from his dark side. If this continues much longer, I am afraid he will lose his will to send and receive.

How can you help? It's easy! All I need is for you to send Inbox a message every once in a while. It doesn't have to be long or formal, and you can talk about *Dateline Houston* or other STC matters. You don't even have to write very often! Inbox doesn't like to admit it, but he really is rather low maintenance. Just remember that

Inbox gets so excited when he receives your messages that he likes to share them with other *Dateline Houston* readers. Don't let that stop you, though! I have found Inbox to have admirable discretion and I know he values you and your opinions. Inbox knows that it's you and your opinions that keep *Dateline Houston* alive.

So will you help my poor, lonely Inbox? I'm counting on you! Donate your messages now to **Rebecca.Taylor@compaq.com!**

Forum 2003 Plans Moving Ahead

The next "Forum" Conference will be held from June 30 to July 2, 2003, at the Hotel Palazzo Delle Stelline in central Milan, Italy, which is within easy walking distance of major tourist sites, shops, and restaurants. This will be the seventh in the series of "Forum" conferences, which started in 1975. The conference theme is "Meeting the Cross-Cultural Challenge."

Idea Markets will be a cornerstone of the conference. Developed 30 years ago by Ulf Anderssen and Lars Forslund in Sweden, Idea Markets have become recognized as the ideal way to present and exchange information. Rather than have delegates sitting in rows listening to a speaker deliver information in a one-

way setting, in an Idea Market everyone participates in an interactive exchange of ideas. It's exhilarating and refreshing!

Milan is a wonderful choice for the conference site, because it is easily accessible, either by air or by rail, has a great climate, and offers a significant range of attractions.

Particularly recommended are the Cathedral (Il Duomo) and Cathedral Plaza, the La Scala Theatre and theatre shop, and numerous museums and art galleries. Within 100 meters of the conference hotel is St. Maria delle Grazie Church, with Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of The Last Supper (painted between 1494 and 1498) on a wall of the Dominican

monastery. Because it is difficult to get tickets to see the painting, your conference committee is arranging to book visits for conference delegates in advance.

We will be sending out more information in the coming months. For the moment, mark your calendar with a big "F2003" as a reminder that a major technical communication event will be occurring next year. You can also contact the following people for more information:

- Michael Fritz, conference chair, at **m.fritz@tek.com.de**
- Ron Blicq, publicity chair, at **ronb@rgilearning.com**
- Your INTECOM delegate

Changing Your Address?

STC members changing their address can easily update their record with the STC office. Visit the address change page on the STC web site at www.stc.org/address_change.html to make your switch.

Also, if you're changing your e-mail address, you'll want to subscribe to the STC Houston Mailing List (www.stc-houston.org/maillinglist.html) and the Dateline Houston Mailing List (www.stc-houston.org/newsmailinglist.html). These e-mail lists are invaluable sources for chapter news and events.

Director-Sponsor Report

Strategies for Making Change Work

by J. Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

I took a few days off work last month to visit and present programs for some STC chapters. When I returned to the office, I learned the company had reduced its workforce by 25 percent. Thankfully, I survived the layoff, but it caused me to reflect on how people are unexpectedly faced with dramatic changes in their lives. Changes they must learn to manage. Even though I was not laid off, I've had to confront emotions and adjust in other ways.

Change has been a part of our lives since birth. It's that way for all of us. We are what we are because we've gone through—and survived—all kinds of change. And that change has had various effects on our lives.

Although we don't always welcome change, more times than not it is a positive force in our lives. At least that's been my experience. As I tried to understand myself and my reactions to change, I read all I could find on the subject.

Over the years, I learned some strategies from experts that help me accept change and make it work in my life. Perhaps if you are going through some kind of change, using these strategies will help you make sense of it.

Anticipate Workplace Change and Be Ready for It

First, you must accept that change is with us, and it is here to stay. Once you know about and accept change, you can anticipate it, prepare for it, and make it work for you!

How can you prepare for workplace change? Reading books like *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler and *Understanding Tomorrow* by Lyle Schaller can help. Putting these

strategies into action is perhaps the most important way of all. The key is that you honestly accept workplace change as a fact of life. Instead of resisting or fighting it, consciously decide to make it work for you. It's a mindset technique—an important one!

View Change as Opportunity

When faced with change, I think "CEO," Change Equals Opportunity. If you want to be the CEO of your life, you must think like a CEO. Without change, neither you nor I would be where we are today. Change has broadened our horizons, enabled us to grow, and brought us to where we are today. With every change in our lives, there have been new opportunities. The same thing can happen in the workplace.

Practice Effective Stress-Management Techniques

If you are feeling stressed, you must practice good stress-management strategies. There are many good books on stress management. Briefly, you must:

- control your emotions, not let your emotions control you
- ignore rumors
- accept that change takes place
- take care of yourself physically
- keep from acting out of anger

Do Your Work

Even in the midst of organizational change, it's important to keep your part of the bargain. There will be others who don't. But unless they hinder you in getting your work done, those people aren't your worry. Your concern is to be true to yourself and to

do things that, over the long haul, will help.

Management watches, observes, and remembers.

When there's a future promotion opportunity or someone is needed for a special project, management will look to those who helped during the change—even if they didn't particularly like what took place. It's in your own best interest to continue to do your work to the best of your abilities.

Look for Ways to Do More

There are always lots of things that don't seem to get done during organizational changes. Instead of wasting energy trying to assign blame or worrying about why those things aren't getting done, step up and do more yourself!

Be ready and willing to take on a new assignment, stay late so that an important project gets done on time, or take on extra responsibility. It will be noticed, because companies seek employees who look for ways to do things better, more efficiently, or with fewer resources.

Tell Others About the Results of Your Work

The best way to help managers know you are successful is to "toot your own horn." Start by making a list of the many things you do in your job. List the projects you're involved in, the teams you belong to, or any special assignments you've completed. Then list the results of those activities.

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Suzanna Laurent

Houston Members Present at Annual Conference

by Rebecca Taylor, Product Marketing Analyst, Compaq Computer Corporation

STC Houston members will make a strong showing at the STC 49th Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Running May 5–8, 2002, the Annual Conference is the highlight of the STC year, with over 2,200 attendees from all over the world.

Houston Presenters

The Annual Conference will offer over 200 sessions. Read on to discover a few that will be presented by STC Houston members.

A Methodology for Documentation Outsourcing, Panel

Maria Fee, Tracee Herring, and Everett Pucket,
Kitba Consulting Services, L.P.

This presentation will lead clients down the critical path to successful relationships with technical communication vendors, and will address such factors as gaining management approval and setting realistic goals.

Creating Plug-and-Go Documentation Using FrameMaker 6.0, Demonstration

Melanie G. Flanders,
KnowledgeMasters, Inc.

Many hardware and software companies are designing plug-and-go components that allow them to provide less costly, customized products for their customers. How do you create documentation that is plug-and-go as well?

Should You Incorporate?, Workshop

Melanie G. Flanders,
KnowledgeMasters, Inc.

Technical communicators who are contemplating becoming independent

can discover whether incorporation is for them. This session considers the advantages of different types of legal entities for business.

The Accessibility Challenge

Tom Howard,
Compaq Computer Corporation

Lee Turner, NetIQ Corporation

The section 508 legislation has challenged technical communicators to create accessible user documentation and identify accessibility features of products sold to government agencies. Learn how Compaq and NetIQ writers met this challenge.

Mystery Novels and Technical Communication, Panel

Ann Jennings,
University of Houston-Downtown

Don't be kept in the dark! This panel discussion takes a lighthearted look at the link between the mystery novel and technical communication. Ann Jennings will discuss using an electronic murder mystery game to convey scientific information.

Integrating User Assistance and Embedded Help

Paul Mueller, NetIQ Corporation

This session discusses the process used at NetIQ to develop several embedded help systems for cutting-edge products. In previous sessions presented by Paul about embedded help, some attendees wanted more step-by-step guidance, as well as a discussion of the lessons learned. This session will focus on the entire process, and will use several existing products to outline each step and discuss the design issues. He will also provide information gathered during

several usability tests, addressing specific areas of the design.

Designing a Comprehensive Product Library

Paul Mueller, NetIQ Corporation

This session discusses the various decisions required when designing the online and printed library for a software product. Paul will discuss the lessons learned in moving information between print and online, and the usability feedback received. He will also discuss the organization considerations for online and embedded help, as well as how single-sourcing and continuous publication plays a role in design decisions. This session will focus on the entire design process, and will use several existing products to discuss the various design issues.

The Marathon of Chapter Presidency, Panel

Linda Oestreich,
STC Fellow, BMC Software, Inc.

George Slaught,
BMC Software, Inc.

This panel discussion helps chapter leaders meet challenges, get ideas, and find solutions to questions. Bring your ideas and your concerns to this interactive, fun, and informal panel discussion.

Editing with Heart, Workshop

Linda Oestreich,
STC Fellow, BMC Software, Inc.

Editing today must be done with concern for the users, the writers, and the companies that employ both. This workshop demonstrates how to edit with heart through exercises and discussions.

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Employment Committee News

by Gary Foster, Senior Technical Writer, Weatherford CiDRA

During this past year, the Employment Committee has played a very active part in assisting our members find employment. I am proud of the fact that we have made a positive difference in the lives of so many people. We have taken the opportunity to contact companies that have advertised in the newspaper about job openings, made phone calls to follow up on possible openings, and the most important—follow up on leads given to us by our members.

With the help and support of our membership, the Employment Committee sponsored a “Share the Knowledge” seminar about employment this spring. It was so well received that we will hold another seminar the following spring. My personal thanks go to the people who played an active part in this event.

The Employment Committee was created to help members find employment and advance their careers in technical communication. If you are one of these people, we want to help you.

Prior to each membership meeting (the second Tuesday of each month) we

sponsor a get-together for people looking for employment. The get-together starts at 5:30 p.m. and ends at 6:30 p.m. We discuss what works well in interviews, give advice on resumes, and discuss the job market for Houston and the surrounding areas.

Our Employment Web site is next to none. On the Web site, you can see who's looking for staff and who's looking for work. We designed the web site so that it is easy to post job openings and also post your professional details when looking for work.

We have created a list of local companies and consultant agencies that employ technical communicators. The list is available electronically and can be downloaded from the Employment Web site. This document was summarized from our membership list.

Even if you are not looking for employment at this time, visit our Web site just to see what the job market is doing. Our goal is to inform companies that when they need a technical communicator, they can call one place—the STC Houston Chapter Employment Committee.

STC Houston Wins Award

by April Cooper, Information Developer, NetIQ Corporation

The Houston chapter recently won an Award of Excellence in the STC International Public Relations Competition! This makes the second year in a row that STC Houston has achieved recognition for its publicity efforts, proving that we truly are an award-winning chapter!

Our submission included all publicity materials for the Region 5 Conference hosted last October: the publicity plan, newsletter articles, signs, print items, the programs CD, and the web site.

The judges praised the entry with these glowing remarks: “Effective use of unifying color and design” and “Conference materials are high quality and well done!”

Thank you to Kate Compton, the conference Publicity Committee manager, Rebecca Taylor, the conference Publications Committee manager, and their committees for publishing some stellar materials. These members worked hard to help make the conference a success, and it shows!

Networking Opportunities

American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) Calendar
www.amwasouthwest.org/calendar.htm

Association for Women in Computing (AWC) meeting, April 17
www.awchouston.org/meeting.htm

Association of Authors and Publishers (AAP) upcoming meetings
www.authorsandpublishers.org/upcoming-events.html

International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) meeting, April 11
www.iabchouston.com/meetings.htm

If you have a networking opportunity to share, please tell us!
Go to www.stc-houston.org/contacteditor.htm.

Houston Members Present at Annual Conference

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Creating the Definitive Chapter Resource: The Story of www.stc-houston.org

George Slaughter, BMC Software, Inc.

This presentation describes the research, planning, and execution of STC Houston's Web site redesign project. The redesigned Web site won an Award of Merit in the STC Public Relations Competition.

Tips for New Managers—from New Managers!

Susan Tacker, NetIQ Corporation

This progression provides tips gathered from new managers' experiences to help other new managers succeed. It also elicits tips from participants' own experience, and

encourages discussion about the following topics: What can new managers expect? What's the most important lesson you've learned so far? What do you wish you had known before you started?

Conference Tips

The Annual Conference is a much-anticipated event for rookie and veteran conference-goers alike.

Before you go, be sure to check out the following resources:

Make the most of your conference experience by reading Linda Oestreich's article "Conference-Going 101" in the May 2001 issue of *Dateline Houston* (www.stc-houston.org/newsarchives/2001_05may.pdf).

Plan your agenda ahead of time by visiting the conference Web site at www.stc.org/49thConf/index.html. New for this year, you can search for sessions by day, topic, stem, keyword, or speaker name. This is a great new resource, so be sure to check it out!

Don't forget to register before April 19 to avoid late registration rate increases!

Future Annual Conferences

Mark your calendar now for future STC Annual Conferences:

- May 18–21, 2003, Dallas, Texas
- May 9–12, 2004, Baltimore, Maryland
- May 8–11, 2005, Seattle, Washington

Director-Sponsor Report

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For example, let's say you are the leader of a documentation team. As you analyze what you do, you begin to realize that you've had some great results, which might include reducing costs, improving processes, or saving time while producing better documentation. Why focus on results? Because the results you've achieved are a strong indicator of what you do best.

Once you've identified the results of your work, tell others. You can

mention your results to a supervisor during a staff meeting, make sure your written reports include statements about the results of your work, or pin up a note on the wall of your office to remind you (and others) of your success.

Be Someone Others Enjoy Working With

Nobody likes to work alongside a grouch, a complainer, or a negative person. Make it your goal to be the one

who has a positive attitude, smiles, and says "please" and "thank you."

There will always be some who grumble in the midst of change, who see only the drawbacks and not the opportunities. It's more important to be someone who others enjoy working with; it's not only more fun, but it's the key to making change work for you!

For Suzanna's previous director-sponsor articles, visit pages.prodigy.net/slaurent. You can reach Suzanna by email at slaurent@prodigy.net.

Houston Chapter 2002–2003 Election



For President: George Slaughter

George Slaughter has been a member of STC since 1991 and has been active with STC

Houston since returning to his hometown in January 1998.

George was elected president in 2001. During his term, STC Houston has had many successes, which include:

- Moving the *Dateline Houston* newsletter exclusively online
- Launching an online job board for technical communicators
- Successfully hosting the Region 5 Conference
- Actively participating in the KUHT Channel 8 Pledge Drive
- Successfully sponsoring the Technical Publications, Art, and Online Competition and Awards Banquet

George is an information developer at BMC Software, Inc. and has over 16 years of experience in communications. His work has appeared in numerous publications, including the STC *Technical Communication* quarterly journal.

As president of STC Houston, George will oversee both the chapter's long-range planning efforts and the creation of a mentor program for STC Houston members.



For Vice President: Paul Mueller

Paul Mueller is the senior information development manager for NetIQ Corporation. He

earned degrees in computer science and mathematics from Pennsylvania

State University and has been involved in technical communication for more than 15 years. His accomplishments include developing the prototype of the Help system for IBM OS/2.

As an STC member, Paul has been active in the Houston chapter for the past five years. He was the comanager of the programs committee for the STC Region 5 Conference this October, and currently he is the director of programs for the Houston chapter. Paul has also judged several competitions and spoken to groups in the area about the technical communication field. In addition to these contributions, Paul and his team have received many STC awards for documentation with Mission Critical Software and NetIQ Corporation.

Paul believes that we should provide information when and where the users need it. Methods for delivering information continue to change, and our roles within our organizations also change. Paul would like to help bring information about these changes to the industry and help members continue to develop new, innovative ways of providing information.



For Treasurer: Wayne Schmadeka

Wayne Schmadeka, Ph.D., has been a member of STC since the mid 1990s, has

presented at a Region 5 Conference, and has served as the Houston Chapter treasurer during the 2001–2002 fiscal year.

Wayne is an information developer at BMC Software, Inc. Prior to BMC, he was on the management team of Kitba Consulting Services, Inc. From 1985 until 1997, Wayne started and ran a

company that developed reading improvement software. The software was honored for its excellence by The Johns Hopkins University in national competition.

As treasurer, Wayne will help the Chapter remain fiscally healthy.



For Secretary: Lory Rogers

Lory Rogers became a member of the STC in the Spring of 2001 and has participated as a member and a

volunteer. She first became acquainted with the STC while working at Berger & Co. from 1998 to 2000, assisting the director of the technical writing practice and coordinating the activities for the technical writers involved in STC activities. Currently, she is the office manager for Goode Technical Solutions.

In addition, she is enrolled in the creative writing program at the University of Houston. She published in several college journals and local newspapers. Her interest extends to all fields of writing, including technical writing. She has served as the secretary and the treasurer of the Johnnie Harris Writers Association and is currently the treasurer of the Geospatial Information & Technology Association (GITA) Houston chapter for the year 2002.

She finds her STC membership to be advantageous, especially for the contacts and friendships that she has developed.



For Director: Deborah Crockett

Deborah Crockett is a 16-year employee of Compaq Computer Corporation, where she and her team won an Award of Excellence and Award of Distinguished Technical Communication. She holds a B.A. in English from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, and a Master of Arts from the University of Houston.

Before she took a hiatus to raise her family, she was very involved with the STC. Her activities included presenting a paper on modular documentation at the International Technical Communications Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and working on the conference committee for the International Conference in Houston. Since her children are now grown, she would like to become active in the STC again.



For Director: Rene Gedaly

Rene Gedaly has been a member of STC for over six years. In 2001, she served as a Mistress of Fun for the

Region 5 Conference as well as manager and judge for the Technical Art Competitions. In an earlier competition, she served as a publications manager.

Currently, she is an information developer at BMC Software, following experiences as a geophysicist and programmer and analyst. Her significant accomplishments include chairing a graphics symposium and writing and editing two technical newsletters. In addition, she ran the publicity campaign for Houston's Anne Frank exhibit.

As an STC director, she would like to help promote the technical writing profession.



For Director: Cindy Pao

Cindy Pao has been an STC member for over five years. She served as the manager of the hospitality committee for the STC Region 5 conference last year and as the manager of the 2001 Awards Banquet for our chapter.

Cindy is an information developer at BMC Software, documenting PATROL Knowledge Modules. Before joining BMC Software, Cindy was the sole technical writer in the IS department at Weatherford International, where she documented a help desk application. She enjoys indexing and keeping on top of the latest documentation technologies.

As director, Cindy would like to help mentor, enrich, and lead the chapter members to be the brightest stars in their field.



For Director: Mark Stepp

Mark Stepp has served as a technical writer in the Houston area for 11 years. Before becoming a technical writer, he worked as a newspaper and magazine reporter and editor. He is the former owner of Gateway Publishing and Astro Print and Publishing companies of Oklahoma, producing nonfiction business books and specialty and general interest newspapers and magazines.

Mark was the manager of strategic planning for STC Houston for the year 2001-2002.



For Director: Pat Bishop

Pat Bishop is a senior member of STC and has been actively involved at the society and chapter levels. At the society level, she participated in panel presentations, served as an evaluator in publication evaluation workshops, and was registration manager for the 1991 annual conference. For the Houston chapter, she served as director of satellites and as competitions manager and membership manager. She has been a judge for chapter competitions, worked on a regional conference, and comanaged a seminar for ISO 9000.

She has been employed by Candle Corporation since June, 1993. In her current position as a developer advisor, she documents software products that support mainframe, PC, Web, and database products. She also maintains portions of Candle Corporation's Intranet related to documentation standards and tools used by the Information Development department. She has a B.A. from the University of North Dakota and has done graduate work at the University of Wisconsin.



**For Director:
Rebecca Taylor**

Rebecca Taylor has been an active STC member since she joined the New

Mexico Tech (NMT) Student Chapter in 1997. She served as the NMT chapter president for two years. Under her leadership, the chapter received a Chapter Achievement Award in 1999. As the chapter's newsletter editor, she was part of the team that garnered a Merit Award in the STC Newsletter Competition. Her most treasured memento from the NMT chapter is the Distinguished Chapter Service Award that she received in 1999. Rebecca moved to Houston in 1999 and became active with the Houston chapter when Melanie Flanders and Nicole Wycislo recruited her to act as the Region 5 Conference publications committee manager. In 2001, Rebecca became the managing editor for *Dateline Houston*.

Rebecca is a product marketing analyst at Compaq Computer Corporation and has worked at Compaq for almost three years. She is passionate about encouraging and empowering her colleagues to embrace evolving technology to communicate better and more often. Since her college adventure is still fresh in her memory, she is also eager to help students find a home in STC and the technical communication profession.

As director, Rebecca will seek innovative ways to provide members with a positive and rewarding STC experience.



**For Director: Steve
Cunningham**

Steve Cunningham joined the STC in Austin in 1989 and has been enjoying the benefits of

membership ever since. He served as newsletter editor for the Austin chapter in the early '90s and continued his STC membership while working as a procedures analyst at a bank in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 1993 through 1997. At that time, Saudi Arabia had no Internet access, so Steve and his colleagues shared STC periodicals and journals. Upon returning to the States in 1998, Steve joined the Houston chapter. In 2000, he was a member of the team that redesigned the chapter Web site, and he continues as a pages editor.

Steve is employed by Kitba Consulting Services, L.P. as a Senior Information Developer, doing petroleum industry documentation. Over the course of his career, he has worked for defense contractors, chip makers, software developers, energy traders, and even the Texas Historical Commission helping research and write the text of state historical markers. His professional interests are quality assurance, Web development, and project planning.

Steve is married and has two teen-aged sons, one of whom will be off to college in the fall. He holds a B.A. in Classics and an M.A. in German, with postgraduate studies in Germany and Austria. His interests include structural and historical linguistics, modern and classical languages, philosophy, and music.

As a director of the Houston chapter, Steve will work closely with other administrative council members to help achieve the chapter initiatives for the coming year.

**STC Houston Chapter
Election Bylaws**

**Dateline Houston Article
VIII—Elections Section 5.
Voting and Election**

Officers are elected by a majority of Chapter members voting, in person or by proxy. If no majority is obtained on the first ballot for an office, a second ballot is taken to decide by plurality among the two or more candidates who received the greatest number of votes on the preceding ballot, or to decide ties. Directors are elected by a plurality of the votes cast, in person or by proxy. If a tie occurs, additional ballots are cast to decide the winner. To be valid, a proxy transferring the voting privilege of one voting member to another must be signed by the member who grants the proxy and must be presented to the tellers committee before the ballots are cast. A proxy authorizing another member to vote in person for the absent member will be honored on every ballot; a proxy designating a specific candidate will be honored only on the first ballot for any office. The tellers committee is responsible for determining the validity of votes cast (including proxies), for counting the votes, and for announcing the election results.

Ballot and Authorization Proxy

STC Houston Chapter 2001–2002 Election of Officers and Directors

Please select *one* of the following proxy options. (The section of the Houston chapter bylaws concerning elections is printed on page 12.)

1. I authorize the following member in good standing (print name), _____, to vote in my place in the election on April 9, 2002.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

2. I cast my vote or I authorize the following member in good standing (print name), _____, to cast my vote for the candidates selected.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Officers

For

George Slaughter
President—unopposed

Paul Mueller
Vice President—unopposed

Wayne Schmadeka
Treasurer—unopposed

Lory Rogers
Secretary—unopposed

Directors: (Seven)

For

Pat Bishop

Deborah Crockett

Steve Cunningham

Rene Gedaly

Cindy Pao

Mark Stepp

Rebecca Taylor

Note: Mailed proxies must be received by **April 8**. If you are placing another member's proxy vote at the meeting, you must have the proxy verified by a member of the tellers committee at the registration table the night of the meeting. All first-round proxies must be cast before the program starts.

Members attending the chapter meeting on April 9 will receive a ballot at the meeting.

Mail your proxy ballot to:

STC Houston
ATTN: Tellers Committee
P.O. Box 42051
Houston, TX 77242-2051

March Program Meeting

The STC Houston March program meeting featured three-time Emmy Award winner Marlene McClinton. Marlene shared some tips to help technical communicators more effectively write for video. Marlene's presentation included sample video to help illustrate specific points.

Marlene McClinton is president of Batyah Productions, a private video production company. She is also president of Direct Communications, a private communication company that generates news, documentary, magazine, and industrial programming for television and corporate clients.



Melanie Flanders and Bill Rizer taking advantage of the networking opportunities.



George Slaughter and Marlene McClinton reviewing the speaker's notes.



Suzanne Stuckley-Toboada buying a drink ticket from the hotel cashier.



Mary Gwynne and Heather Shelley enjoying the atmosphere.



Linda Oestreich and Corrine Stith welcoming visitors as they arrived at the meeting. We had many first time visitors.

April 9 Program Meeting

STC National Comes to Houston

Our program meeting on April 9 features condensed presentations by two of our members who are speaking at the national STC conference in Nashville this May:

- **Melanie G. Flanders**, KnowledgeMasters, Inc., Creating Plug-and-Go Documentation Using FrameMaker

Many hardware and software companies are designing plug-and-go components that allow them to provide less costly, customized products for their customers.

- **Paul Mueller**, NetIQ Corporation, Integrating User Assistance and Embedded Help

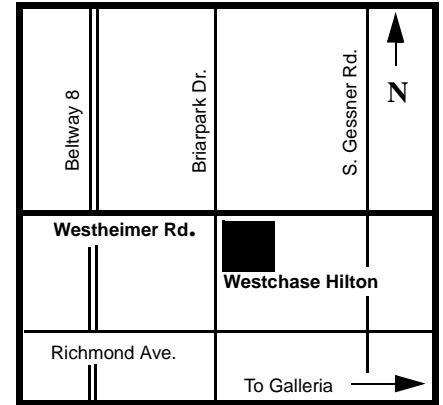
The main objective of this session is to discuss the process we have used to develop several embedded help systems for cutting-edge products.

For more information, go to the STC Houston web site: www.stc-houston.org.

Date:
Tuesday, April 9

Time:
5:30 p.m. networking (hors d'oeuvres)
6:20 p.m. announcements
6:30 p.m. program

Cost:
\$10 (members)
\$13 (non-members)
\$3 (student and unemployed members)
\$6 (student non-members)



Drawing:

A drawing for various prizes is held at the end of each general meeting. Proceeds benefit the Marx Isaacs Student Scholarship Fund.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Dates	Time	Event/Topic	Location	Contact
Apr. 2	6 p.m.	Administrative Council meeting	Kitba Consulting Services 2900 Wilcrest, Suite 270	George Slaughter gslaughter@flex.net
Apr. 9	5:30 p.m.	April program meeting	Hilton Houston Westchase & Towers 9999 Westheimer Road	Paul Mueller answersforall@pobox.com
Apr. 25	EBD*	Deadline for May newsletter	N/A	Rebecca Taylor rebecca.taylor@compaq.com
May. 5-8	All Day	STC 49th Annual Conference	Nashville, Tennessee	www.stc.org/49thConf

*end of business day

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Dateline Houston invites writers to submit articles for publication.

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Submissions

Newsletter contributions are due by the 25th of each month in Microsoft Word or FrameMaker format. All submissions are subject to editing. Please send your submissions to Rebecca Taylor at rebecca.taylor@compaq.com.