

## Our Value is in Designing Documents that Meet Audience Needs

by Bill Gearhart, Director, BMC Software, and Donna Marcotte, Independent Consultant

**W**hen you hire a professional cabinetmaker, you typically don't ask him if he knows how to use a hammer and a saw. While you may be concerned with the quality of his "finish work," you assume he knows how to use the tools of his craft. You are probably most interested in what kind of design work he does. Will the cabinets provide accessible storage so stored items can be easily retrieved? Will the doors and drawers function comfortably? In addition to being functional, will the cabinets be attractive in your home? It is his ability to understand your needs, analyze the available space, and create a viable solution that distinguishes him from just another do-it-yourselfer or an hourly-rate carpenter.

Why then has our profession as technical communicators become so tools oriented? Headhunters and help-wanted ads ask us, "Do you know FrameMaker, Microsoft Word, or Robohelp?" But we are seldom asked about the most critical part of

what we do—our ability to analyze audiences and design documents suitable for their needs. After all, document design is what distinguishes technical communication from word processing.

### What is document design?

Karen Schriver defines document design as "the field concerned with creating texts (broadly defined) that integrate words and pictures in ways that help people to achieve their specific goals for using texts at home, school, or work." (p.10) The purpose of document design is to affect the outcome of a particular reader's situation. The goals of the reader greatly influence the structure, organization, visual elements, and writing style of the text produced for that reader.

For example, readers who are reading for enjoyment require a vastly different design than readers who are reading to do their job quickly and accurately. While the typical novel designed in the traditional text-heavy layout meets the needs of a certain

type of recreational reader, that same design would fail if applied to a procedures manual used by a nuclear power-plant worker who needed to respond quickly to a gauge in alarm.

### How do people derive meaning from text?

The notion of *context* is important in how people derive meaning from text. The field of discourse analysis provides many definitions of context. In very general terms, context can be thought of as knowledge: knowledge of a topic, knowledge of a social situation, and knowledge of the rules of

*continued on page 4*

### In This Issue

From the Editor .....	2
From the President .....	3
Competitions Update .....	4
The Word on Conferences .....	5
Contractor's Corner .....	7
Member News and Views .....	8
Volunteer of the Month.....	9
Director-Sponsor Report.....	10
Calendar .....	11
September Meeting Details.....	12

## 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).

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### 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 Donna Marcotte:

e-mail: DonnaMarcotte@earthlink.net

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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.

# From the Editor . . .

## Look at us now!

by Donna Marcotte, Independent Consultant

**W**elcome to the first edition of *Dateline Houston* for the 2000-2001 Houston chapter "season." How do you like our new look?

Advancements in technology and subsequent lower costs now make it affordable to use four-color printing of the masthead. This change has allowed us to take the skyline theme for *Dateline Houston* in a new direction.

The cover design is based on a photograph by Catherine Bendig, manager of multimedia and web development at Aesbus Knowledge Solutions. Catherine combines a background in fine art and design with expertise in multimedia technology. She was part of a team that won an award for a training CD in the Houston chapter's 1999 technical publications competition. I'm grateful for all her help.

Deborah Long, our chapter president, and graphic artist Ruth Metcalf, both of Enron, volunteered their creative input and professional talents to springboard from the photograph to the final design. I also appreciate their input, work, and creativity.

Many thanks go to all the people who work hard to make this newsletter successful year after year. Our contingent of editors from BMC Software returns: Melanie Boston, Jamie Diamandopoulos, and Jim Hunt. Meredith Montgomery, now a senior technical writer at PentaSafe Security Technologies, Inc., returns as the coordinating editor. They have all been working on this newsletter in some capacity for several years now, which is probably one of the primary reasons that *Dateline Houston* continues to win awards.

Also returning from BMC Software are Greg Van Pelt, who coordinates the final production and printing, and Patrick Rockecharlie, who keeps track of all the information that makes up the monthly calendar. John Reynolds continues to maintain the chapter's membership database and to provide the labels each month for mailing the newsletter.

I'd also like to thank: Verna Dunn, last year's managing editor who has provided a lot of help and support in the transition and Michael Reiland, our account manager at IKON Office Solutions. As the new person in this process, I assure you that I am grateful for each contribution from all these fine folks.

But this newsletter belongs to *all* of us members. How about putting your touch on it too? Let me hear from you!

E-mail me at DonnaMarcotte@earthlink.net.

### Important Houston Chapter Web Site Update!

A team of chapter members is completely redesigning the Houston chapter web site. As part of that process we will register the new URL: [www.stc-houston.org](http://www.stc-houston.org). The new site and URL are expected to be launched on September 1, 2000. However, if there are problems, please continue to look for us at [www.stc.org/region5/hou/index.htm](http://www.stc.org/region5/hou/index.htm). Thanks for your patience as we work through this process.

# From the President . . .

## A "brand" new year!

by Deborah Long, Strategic Communications, Enron Net Works

**H**ello, everybody. As your new STC Houston chapter president, I want to welcome you to another exciting season. Marked by a new Society-level brand, "Designing the Future of Technical Communication," STC is undergoing a face-lift, if you will. This new image, unveiled by outgoing STC president Mary Wise at the annual conference in May, challenges each of us to be creative and gives the entire society a forward-looking direction.



Deborah Long

At the local level, I want to place our focus for the coming year on *creativity* as we actively embrace this brand and boldly lead the way to the future. That is why I selected "Communicate Outside the Box" as the 2000-2001 chapter theme. As you see these words on chapter communications throughout the year, I hope you are inspired to try something different when designing technical documentation. Whether it is a new page layout or more user-friendly language, your audience will be delighted by a fresh look and feel.

Speaking of "different," some old routines have already changed. Our new location for monthly meetings is one example of how STC Houston is reinventing itself for the next millennium. Starting with the September meeting, please join us at the Westchase Hilton (see details on page 12).

Also note that, for a change, we are fortunate to have a vice president, Jocelyn Williams, sharing responsibilities with me. I appreciate the opportunity to co-lead the chapter, and in this spirit of teamwork I urge you to participate in STC activities and events as the year unfolds. Let Jocelyn and me hear from you. We value your ideas and encourage your input.



Vice President, Jocelyn Williams and President, Deborah Long

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# Our Value is in Designing Documents that Meet Audience Needs

by Bill Gearhart and Donna Marcotte

continued from page 1

communication (Schiffren, pp. 362–377). Meaning is derived by an interaction of text (what is said or what is read) and context (what the reader knows or understands about the topic, the situation, and the rules for interpreting the text) (Olson, pp. 5–6).

## What must a technical communicator do?

An effective technical communicator must:

- know theories and principles of designing effective documents
- learn and understand the needs and knowledge of his or her intended audience—its “context”
- apply the relevant theories and design principles that will best meet the needs of the intended audience

While this is fairly easy to say, we know it is not easily done. For example, there may be barriers to communicating with our audiences, barriers that prevent us from determining their precise needs.

These barriers range from geographical distance, to subject matter experts assuring us they know what the audience needs, to managers not providing the budget or means for audience access.

Also, there are many theories of document design, but the best solution for a situation is not always obvious. Often testing is required to determine the effectiveness of a solution—something else managers may not see as necessary and so are not willing to provide budget or means.

As professionals who know the real value of what we bring to the table, it is up to us to educate managers and customers about those skills and to continue to educate ourselves about how to do these things better.

This year, the Houston chapter will devote some time to topics associated with effective document design. This will be done both through monthly meetings beginning with our first one, and through additional articles in *Dateline Houston* prepared by your

colleagues who have found innovative ways to address these issues.

Yes, we need to understand how to use tools of our trade, but we must remember that our true value as professionals lies in our ability to meet the needs of our audience.

Regardless of the tools, if we maintain our focus on the audience and apply sound principles of document design, we, like the cabinetmaker, can create works that are not only technically sound and aesthetically engaging, but that provide great service to their intended users.

## Sources:

Olson, David R. “On the Designing and Understanding of Written Text.” *Designing Usable Texts*. Thomas M. Duffy and Robert Waller, editors. 1985

Schiffren, Deborah. *Approaches to Discourse*. 1994

Schraver, Karen A. *Dynamics in Document Design*. 1996

# Preparations for the 2000-2001 Competitions are in Full Swing

by Heather Shelly, Information Developer, BMC Software

**T**he Houston chapter is participating in competitions during the 2000–2001 year and is seeking submissions from our members. Don’t miss this chance to receive peer feedback on your work and possibly to win recognition for your efforts!

We are accepting entries for the following categories:

- technical publications
- technical art
- online communications

## Submitting Entries

If you are interested in competing this year, you can submit your entries in person at the October 10 program meeting or mail them to:

Jeanne O’Meara  
c/o Dynegy  
1000 Louisiana, Ste. 4819-A  
Houston, TX 77002

## Deadline for Submissions

All entries must be submitted by October 20, 2000. Mailed entries must be postmarked by October 17, 2000.

## Competitions Judges

We are also looking for volunteers to help us judge the entries we receive from our partner chapter this year. Take this opportunity to see what your peers are doing and to network with Houston chapter members. Anyone interested in volunteering for competitions judging should contact:

Heather Shelly  
heather\_shelly@bmc.com  
713-918-5216

For more information, check the chapter website at [www.stc-houston.org](http://www.stc-houston.org).

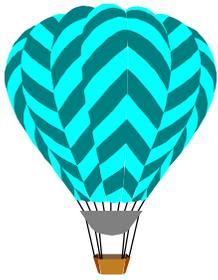
# The Word on Conferences

## World-Class Experts Speak at STC Region 5 Conference

October 13–15, 2000 Sheraton Old Town, Albuquerque, New Mexico

**S**uzanna Laurent, selected in 1997 as one of the Top 10 Business Women in the nation by the American Business Women's Association, will discuss how to create positive team dynamics at the STC Region 5 Conference, "Navigating the New Century," Oct. 13–14, at the Sheraton Old Town in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Laurent, the STC Region 5 director-sponsor, will also conduct a seminar, "The Leadership Challenge" that will address topics on developing



commitment and motivation, delegating for results, leading a successful STC chapter, and taking advantage of the many opportunities STC offers.

The New Mexico Kachina chapter is hosting the conference and has lined up many other world-class experts, ranging from technical communicators to scientists, who will discuss advances in the technical communication field and related fields. Topics of the conference include future subjects in science and engineering, workshops on career

development, challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> century communicators, and modeling information in electronic space.

Keynote speaker Paula Berger of SOLUTIONS will target what's hot and what's not in technical communication today and will predict the ins and outs of the future.

Chuck Campbell, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, will explain how to write so people can understand what you write better, faster, and more accurately. Scott Sanders, University of New Mexico, will show how Web design can draw on the lessons of landscape design for 3D experiences. Steven Howe, Los Alamos National Laboratory, will talk about how we can use antimatter to fuel trips across the cosmos.

The conference will run from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 13, and from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 14. The cost is \$150 for members, \$200 for non-members, and \$90 for students up to Sept. 1. After Sept. 1, the cost increases by \$50 for members and non-members.

The Kachina chapter has reserved a block of rooms at the Sheraton Old Town. Rates are \$125 for a single or double occupancy room. Reservations

can be made by calling 800-237-2133 and mentioning the conference to receive the special rate.

Because the conference will take place during the Kodak Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, the largest ballooning event in the world, attendees are encouraged to make accommodation s early to ensure a room.



A special Saturday morning trip to view the mass ascension of the hot air balloons has been planned for those who wish to participate. The cost is \$25 per person. Transportation arrangements can be made through Gray Line of Albuquerque at 800-256-8991.

The Kachina chapter is a 100-member local branch of the STC. The chapter has been offering educational programs in technical communication for its members and the community since 1983.

### Important Region 5 Conference Contacts

[www.unm.edu/~web290/stcrc5.html](http://www.unm.edu/~web290/stcrc5.html)

Conference Manager	Registration Manager	Public Relations Manager
Rick Johnson 505-277-4144 rsheehan@unm.edu	Teri Wilkins 505-881-9228, ext. 103 tlwilkins@oees.com	Donna Fingado 505-845-1249 dfingado@lrrri.org

## Other Regional Conferences

“Patterns of Communication” Hosted by Region 6	STC Pan-Pacific Conference Hosted by Regions 7&8
<p>September 24–26, 2000 Embassy Suites Hotel, Country Club Plaza Kansas City, MO</p> <p>Your conference registration fee entitles you to technical sessions, exhibits, and social events designed to improve your productivity in your current field while offering you a chance to network with your peers.</p> <p>For details see: <a href="http://www.stc.org/region6/conf.htm">www.stc.org/region6/conf.htm</a></p>	<p>October 18–21, 2000 Renaissance Ilikai Hotel Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, Hawaii</p> <p>Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and North America join forces for an intellectually stimulating look at the world of technical communication.</p> <p>This conference offers an opportunity to develop your career path, learn new technologies, and invest in yourself for the new millennium. For details, see: <a href="http://www.pan-pacific.org">www.pan-pacific.org</a></p>

## Planning for 2001 Region 5 Conference is in Full Swing: Your input Requested

by Melanie G. Flanders, Co-manager, 2001 Region 5 Conference

Even though the Region 5 conference in Albuquerque isn't until October 13–14, 2000, plans are already under way for the 2001 Region 5 conference, which is being hosted by the Houston chapter. The conference will be October 18–20, 2001 at the Westchase Hilton hotel in Houston. The Westchase is a four-star hotel, and they have graciously agreed to give us a \$69 per night room rate for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Several half-day workshops are being planned for Thursday afternoon, October 18, with the conference being held all day Friday and Saturday.

Before lining up speakers for the conference, the Program committee would like to have input from all Region 5 members. A survey has been included in this issue of *Dateline Houston* for members to complete and return to the Program committee. You can also complete the survey online by going to the chapter website at [www.stc-houston.org](http://www.stc-houston.org). The deadline for returning surveys is October 29, 2000.

Co-managers for the 2001 Region 5 conference are Melanie G. Flanders and Nicole Smart-Wycislo.

Committee managers are:

- Arrangements: Dorothy Murray
- Finance: Deborah Silvi
- Hospitality: Cindy Pao
- Program: Paul Mueller and Linda Oestreich
- Publicity: George Slaughter
- Publications: Rebecca Ideus
- Registration: Jocelyn Williams

The 2001 Region 5 Conference committees and interested volunteers attended a kick-off meeting on April 15, 2000. At that meeting we decided on the conference theme, *Invention, Innovation, Ingenuity*, and began developing a logo. At a subsequent meeting we decided on the logo design, which can be seen on the Region 5 Conference web page (go to [www.stc-houston.org](http://www.stc-houston.org) and click on Region 5 Conference.)

A lot of work goes into planning and successfully producing a conference.



The conference committees all need lots of volunteers to help us pull this off. We have small jobs, big jobs, short jobs, long jobs, one-time jobs, and recurring jobs. We're trying to break all the tasks into small manageable pieces so no one person gets overloaded or burned out.

Volunteering can be fun! It's a great way to network and get to know your colleagues better as well as an opportunity for you to try those things that you'd like to do but don't get to do at your job. A contact list for committee managers is on the web page.

Next month: "What does each committee do?"

# Contractor's Corner: What is CIC-SIG Anyway?

by Kim Shaw, Principal Owner, Words & Graphics

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**T**his edition of the Contractor's Corner will bring you up to date on the current state of the Houston CIC-SIG and answer a few questions for newcomers to our group.

## What is CIC-SIG?

CIC-SIG stands for Consultant's and Independent Contractor's Special Interest Group. (Now you know why we use that acronym!) CIC-SIG is an organization of 70+ Houston chapter members who work as free-lancers or have an interest in freelancing.

## What is the purpose of CIC-SIG?

Working independently involves a unique set of challenges that is best understood by other free-lancers. Through CIC-SIG, independent consultants and contractors can exchange ideas, information, contacts, how-to tips, job leads...and the list goes on. In short, CIC-SIG is a support and information resource geared specifically to free-lancers' needs.

## What benefits does CIC-SIG offer?

CIC-SIG maintains a web-based directory of contractors at [www.stc.org/region5/hou/contractorsPIC/contlist.html](http://www.stc.org/region5/hou/contractorsPIC/contlist.html). SIG members may list their business information and capabilities on this site. SIG members who hire subcontractors and Houston-area recruiters who hire technical communicators have found the directory a great resource.

In addition, the SIG maintains a listserv where members can post information, questions, job leads, and

other items of interest to the group. The listserv has evolved into a virtual forum for networking and sharing information—a real bonus for busy free-lancers who can't always find enough time for meetings.

## When does CIC-SIG meet?

Right now it doesn't. Meetings have been suspended for many months because of poor turnout. If there's enough interest, we may reinstate the meetings this year, so stay tuned.

## Who are the CIC-SIG leaders?

This year's co-managers are Kim Shaw and Gaynell Doehne. Gaynell is responsible for maintaining the listserv and updating the contractor directory on the Internet. You can contact Gaynell at [gdoehne@words-work.com](mailto:gdoehne@words-work.com). Kim is responsible for all other SIG activities, including posting contract and job opportunities, publicizing the group internally and externally, and organizing meetings. You can contact Kim at [kim@twowriters.com](mailto:kim@twowriters.com).

## How do I join CIC-SIG?

Membership is open to all independents in the Houston chapter. To join, go to our membership site: [www.stc.org/region5/hou/contractorsPIC/#join](http://www.stc.org/region5/hou/contractorsPIC/#join). Print out the membership form (available in text or PDF format), complete it, and mail it to Gaynell Doehne, P.O. Box 667099, Houston, TX 77266-7099. Please note that joining the STC international CIC-SIG does not automatically make you a member of the chapter SIG—

membership in each group is a separate process.

## How do I subscribe to the listserv?

You will be added to the listserv automatically when you join CIC-SIG. If you're already a member and you are not receiving mail from the list, please make sure that we have your correct e-mail address! We recently deleted several people after the list manager reported bounced addresses. Get in touch with Gaynell Doehne ([gdoehne@words-work.com](mailto:gdoehne@words-work.com)) to update your address.

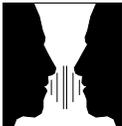
## How do I update or add a listing to the contractor directory?

Send updated information and new listings to Gaynell at [gdoehne@words-work.com](mailto:gdoehne@words-work.com). Before you submit a new listing, please take a look at the Web site and send your information in the existing directory format.

## What are the plans for CIC-SIG this year?

In addition to maintaining the listserv and contractor directory, we plan a direct mail campaign to Houston-area recruiters and contract agencies. We want to increase awareness of our group and continue receiving news about contract openings and job opportunities for our members.

We also plan a membership survey very soon to determine the group's current interests and how the SIG can support them. If you have ideas in the meantime, please get in touch with Kim Shaw at [kim@twowriters.com](mailto:kim@twowriters.com).



### From the Members . . .

by Donna Marcotte

**H**ello all. Welcome to a new column in *Dateline Houston*. I thought this column would provide a more spontaneous, less formal way for more people to participate in the newsletter.

This will feature content submitted by one or more members on any topic he/she/they wish, related to any aspect of technical communication. The content

may be a formal article or just a “letter (or e-mail) to the editor.”

The content may be signed or published anonymously, if desired. I must use my judgement to publish what I think the general membership would consider appropriate, but I am willing to consider somewhat controversial topics.

I sent the initial notice of this column out to our chapter e-mail list. I received

two comments back, one from Sandra Rybarczyk and one from Jim Hunt. Both thought it was a good idea. Jim—always the editor—suggested I change the title to “From the Members...” (I originally had “membership”) because it had a more personal feel.

I took Jim’s suggestion, now I want to hear yours. Let me hear from you! E-mail me at [DonnaMarcotte@earthlink.net](mailto:DonnaMarcotte@earthlink.net).

### Memories from the Honors Banquet

By Janette Sexton-Shahout

**M**agic was in the air the evening of May 23, 2000, at the honors banquet at the 47th Annual STC Conference in Orlando. Colorful balloon bouquets, which are traditionally bestowed upon award-winning chapters, added a festive touch.

Janette Sexton-Shahout, Deborah Long, Jocelyn Williams, and Ann Blankinship sat at the Houston table. Several other chapter members were scattered throughout the crowded room.

Houston’s Sherri Smith was there to accept the rank of Fellow. It was an exciting moment when the rank of Fellow was conferred upon her “For significant contributions to the publication of economical and usable computer documentation, for the effective management of documentation

teams, and for service to the profession and the Society.”

Moments later, the Houston chapter received the Region 5 Chapter Pacesetter Award “For continued, outstanding effort to promote effective communication for technical communicators in Houston and Bryan–College Station, Texas, and in Louisiana.”

It was a memorable night for the Houston chapter, the culmination of a very good year. It was a year marked by the successes and accomplishments of its many members.



*Presidents present, past and future at the banquet: Deborah Long, Janette Sexton-Shahout, Ann Blankinship(94-95), Jocelyn Williams*

### New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy

**T**he following new members have joined the chapter. Please welcome them!

#### Christine Shelton

Christine, a new student member, has recently taken a job in Austin and plans to transfer to the University of Texas to pursue a degree in public relations. She hopes to complete her degree in two and a half years while working full time. Christine is interested in writing instructional materials in a training (human resources or consulting) capacity.

#### David Biggs

David has been living in Houston for about 19 months. He started his career here as a writer/illustrator for Metamor Documentation, where he is now a lead artist/graphic designer. He spends most of his work time organizing the workflow and creating CAD drawings of computer hardware.

# Jim Walsh, September Volunteer of the Month

by Mac Katzin

**J**im Walsh, a 28-year veteran of Texas Instruments (TI), is the September Volunteer of the Month. A graduate of Texas Tech University, one of the finest technical communications schools in the nation, Jim plied his trade writing many volumes about TI's microcontrollers. He is now retired and traveling the world. Jim and his wife recently returned from a trip to Copenhagen, Denmark, a short stop in Germany, and a good look at several cities and fjords in Norway.



*Jim Walsh*

Actually, this is the second time that Jim has received the STC Volunteer of the Month award. He also received the award during the 1997-1998 year for

his outstanding contributions to chapter finances and recordkeeping. During that year, Jim helped solve several financial/accounting problems and was instrumental in the following initiatives:

- getting chapter leaders comfortable with a new, user-friendly financial accounting software that Richard Powell implemented the previous year
- standardizing categories that leaders use to budget and account for actual income and expenses across committees and to better plan for future expenses
- improving the expense reimbursement form
- strategic planning to eliminate unnecessary expenses and get the chapter finances back in the "black"

From 1998 to 2000, Jim presided over chapter finances in a way that allowed us to spend more money for important activities. Although the chapter had money for most of its activities, Jim wasn't content to leave the bank account as it was. He always stayed abreast of financial offerings from banks and made sure that the chapter got the best use of its money. He periodically negotiated rates for chapter accounts and made several recommendations about changes to the accounts that were wholeheartedly approved by chapter leaders.

In addition to being a strong chapter advocate with banks that we do business with, Jim has always been available to help individual chapter leaders with their budgets and income and expense reports.

Many thanks for a wonderful job, Jim.

## Many New Senior Members in Houston: Congrats to All!

Congratulations to the following Houston chapter members for achieving senior member status (five years of membership):

- |                  |                     |                       |                          |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| • David Bergen   | • William Hunter    | • Cindy Stepinoff     | • Keith Jurgens          |
| • Jeanne O'Meara | • Karen Rodgers     | • Judy Morgan         | • Janette Sexton-Shahout |
| • Ed Lawrence    | • Hal DeHaven       | • Cynthia Graham      | • Holly Jahangiri        |
| • Jane Lakatos   | • Sheila Steele     | • Janese Parks        | • Paula Puffer           |
| • Peter Lunde    | • Karen Whyman      | • Michele Morgan Wray | • Joe Whisenant          |
| • Scott Ward     | • Marianne Silvetti | • Mary Campbell       | • Theresa Anderson       |
| • Marlane Kayfes | • Tom Rutland       | • Fred Andrews        |                          |

## Tips and Tricks: Retrieving Graphics from Word Files

by Ola Humphries

How can you retrieve the graphics embedded in a Microsoft Word document in a form that is usable for other applications?

Save the Word document as HTML. The graphics will be saved out as .gif files, which you can use in a variety of other applications including the Web.



# Region 5 Director-Sponsor Report

## Conference Provides Opportunities

by Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

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The 2,400 members who attended the STC annual conference May 21-24 in Orlando discovered that there is more than one “magic kingdom.” Of course, the best known one is Walt Disney World’s Magic Kingdom, but the Florida chapter members who hosted the conference created a second magic kingdom called “Renaissance Communicators: A Vision of Our Future.”

### Chapter Honors

The Honors Banquet was a time of “magic” for two Region 5 chapters who received the Chapter Achievement Awards in their size categories. Congratulations to the Phoenix chapter and the Oklahoma chapter, who won this prestigious award.

Congratulations also to Houston chapter members who received a Pacesetter award for their outstanding efforts in furthering the technical communication profession in Texas and Louisiana.

In addition, two Region 5 students from TexasTech University at Lubbock were each awarded a \$2,500 STC scholarship.

Serving on your international board of directors has been a rewarding experience for me this past year, and I am looking forward to the next two years as well. At the Spring board meeting held just before this conference in Orlando, the STC international board of directors

approved the following items of business.

### Merit Grants

- Michigan Tech University student chapter for \$3,000 scholarship fund for seed money to cover expenses for selected students to attend STC annual and regional conferences
- Northeast Ohio chapter for \$500 to support and expand its mentoring program
- Northeast Ohio chapter for \$1,000 to enhance its publicity program
- Central Ohio chapter for \$1,500 to offer a Region 4 leadership training workshop and conference for leaders of both student and professional chapters
- shipping expenses not to exceed \$1,000 to send the ITPC winning entries to the Singapore chapter

### Loans

- multi-chapter loan of \$2,500 for the Region 6 conference

### Research Grants

- Saul Carliner for \$9,960 on “What Do We Manage? A Survey of the Management Portfolios of Large Technical Communications Departments”
- Michael Albers and Loel Kim for \$10,000 on “User Web Browsing Characteristics using Palm Handheld for Information Retrieval”

### Brand Tools

- brand tools created by STC Brand Development Team

### Interim Executive Council Actions

- dissolution of the Illinois State University student chapter, effective January 20, 2000
- formation of the Montana chapter with a \$200 start-up grant and the dissolution of the Montana student chapter, effective February 15, 2000
- formation of the Long Island chapter effective March 13, 2000, with a \$350 start-up grant

### Industry Fellowship for Faculty

- Industry Fellowship for Faculty of \$2,000 USD to Dwedor Morais Ford, contingent on her obtaining an industry internship position

A conference involves so much more than just learning new and interesting things: it’s making friends and having fun as well! When the conference closed and members started travelling home to places around the world, I thought of all the new friends and acquaintances I gained through this “magical” experience.

If you attended, I hope you had a safe trip home and that you can share your experiences with those who were unable to take advantage of our annual conference—which is one of STC’s most beneficial opportunities.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event/Topic</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<b>Sept 1</b>	EBD*	deadline for Oct. newsletter		gregory_van_pelt@bmc.com (for October issue only)
<b>Sept 12</b>	5:30 p.m.	general meeting	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	see article on page 12
<b>Sept 12</b>	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston board meeting	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Deborah Long (see "Chapter Contacts" on page 3)
<b>Sept 24–26</b>	All day	Region 6 Conference	Kansas City, MO	see article on page 6
<b>Oct 1</b>	EBD*	deadline for Nov. newsletter		donnamarcotte@earthlink.net
<b>Oct 10</b>	5:30 p.m.	general meeting	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Deborah Long (see "Chapter Contacts" on page 3)
<b>Oct 10</b>	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston board meeting	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Deborah Long (see "Chapter Contacts" on page 3)
<b>Oct 13–14</b>	All day	Region 5 Conference	Albuquerque, NM	see article on page 5
<b>Oct 17</b>	12:00 a.m.	deadline (postmark) competition entries mailed	see article on page 4	Heather Shelly heather_shelly@bmc.com
<b>Oct 20</b>	EBD*	deadline competition entries submitted/delivered	see article on page 4	Heather Shelly heather_shelly@bmc.com
<b>Oct 29</b>	12:00 a.m.	deadline survey for 2001 Region 5 Conference		see article on page 5

\* end of business day

## September 12, 2000 Program

Karen A. Schriver, Ph.D.  
presents



### Designing for the Suspicious, the Skeptical, the Just Plain Cranky

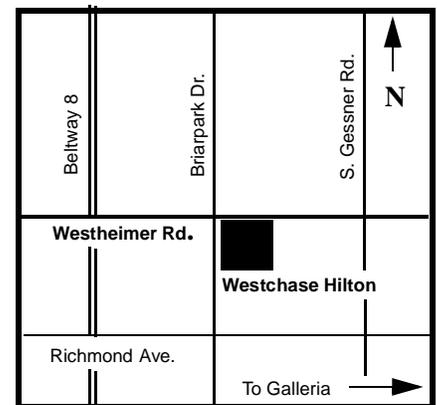
To excel as information designers we must worry about audiences who may not want to engage with the words and pictures we create. We need to orchestrate text and graphics to engage those reluctant souls who would rather not. This requires careful consideration of how information design influences people's cognitive and emotional responses to our subject. Doing so is a complex task, for it demands attention to more issues than technical accuracy, linguistic clarity, and even usability.

This talk addresses the problem of designing for difficult audiences. It first identifies key issues that information designers need to worry about, then illustrates these issues through a variety of examples.

Dr. Karen A. Schriver has been a teacher, researcher, and consultant in document design for more than a decade. She has received numerous prestigious awards for her sustained and innovative contributions to document design and technical communications. Her book *Dynamics in Document Design* has become a bible for information design. Karen is currently president of KSA, a document-design research and consulting company. Karen was recently honored as an Associate Fellow of STC.

## Meeting Basics

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



**Date:** Tuesday, September 12, 2000

**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)

### Monthly Drawing

A drawing for various prizes is held at the end of each general meeting. Tickets for the drawing can be purchased at the registration desk. Proceeds benefit the Marx Isaacs Student Scholarship Fund.

Dr. Schriver has been kind enough to donate a copy of her book, *Dynamics in Document Design*, as this month's prize.