



STC Southeastern Michigan Chapter

TECHcomments

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SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION



Chapter President's Letter

WOW...2004!

Mary Jo David
STC-SM Chapter President

Wasn't it just yesterday we were surrounded by the "new millennium" hype? How is it that three years have passed so quickly?!

Admittedly, one year ago, I had my worst year since founding my business in 1997. Doesn't it figure, the year I began my chapter presidency was the year I found it toughest to budget my dues payment! Things picked up in 2003, so my dues payment for 2004 is already in the mail, but like many people, I'm still reeling from a slow economy. As such, I'm forced to really stop and think about where my money is going and whether I'm getting my money's worth out of my STC dues.

Many people have heard me say that for more than ten years, I was an STC "lurker"—meaning that I maintained my membership to do nothing more than read *TECHcomments*, *Intercom*, and *Technical Communication* (STC's journal). It was worth it to me (or the companies I worked for) to maintain my membership because I depended on these publications to fill in the blanks about concepts, tools, and technology I needed in order to advance in my career as a technical communicator.

I consider myself very fortunate that, over the years, I've been able to develop an extensive network of writers, some STC members and some not, but many of whom I count as friends. It helped that from 1984 to 1997 I worked for five different companies! But prior to starting my business, I decided I needed to start networking beyond my usual group of cronies, so I began attending a chapter program here and a networking lunch there. Now, in addition to being knee-deep in chapter activities, I've increased my "writers' network" many times over.

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To you, all of this might sound like a lot of work with little reward, but I beg to differ! I became active in the chapter hoping to find out more about businesses that hire contract writers and to keep up with what's new in the field. (Anyone who's ever contracted knows it's not easy to stay "up to speed" as a freelancer. Most training you attend is an unbillable, out-of-pocket expense, so you need to make the most of local opportunities, preferably after business hours.) While I didn't become active in STC with the intention of gaining contract work from fellow members, I've been lucky enough to win the confidence of a few fellow members who have recommended me for contract work over the years.

But, as one astute Council member pointed out, "You can attend chapter programs whether you're a member or not, so why bother joining STC?" That brings me to the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that many of you aren't even taking advantage of. Admittedly, STC needs to make it easier for us to remember which SIGs we joined and what benefits each SIG has to offer. While it would have been great to have the SIGs automatically find me, they didn't. Instead, I had to be proactive about finding the SIGs I joined and their associated listservs. But through the SIG listservs, I've extended my writers' network—I daresay a thousandfold—communicating with writers all over the U.S., Canada, and the world!

If you lose track of which SIGs you've joined, contact the STC to refresh your memory (phone 703.522.4114 or e-mail membership@stc.org). If you'd like to find out about a specific SIG, go to www.stc.org/sig_info.asp and click on the link for the particular SIG you're interested in. If you're not sure which SIGs to join, ask around at the next chapter program or, if you're an STC member, join our local chapter listserv and post a question asking fellow chapter members which SIGs they find useful.

It's the New Year...a time for renewal and resolutions. I suggest combining the two—renew your STC membership, but resolve that you'll make it worth your while and take advantage of everything the international organization and our local chapter have to offer!



SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Four awards of \$1,000 each will be granted for academic year 2004-2005.

Application deadline is February 16, 2004.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office:

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
703-522-4114

www.stc.org

NAVIGATING



THE FUTURE OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Baltimore, Maryland

May 9 – 12, 2004

Nancy Hoffman

Running for 2VP

By Nancy J. Hoffman

Fellow

Southeastern Michigan Chapter

Early in 2004, you will elect a new STC Second Vice President (2VP). After serving as 2VP, that person becomes First Vice President, then President, and finally Immediate Past President. Whoever wins the upcoming election makes a four-year commitment and performs a lot of volunteer work on behalf of STC and its members. I'm one of the candidates and I will be very happy and very proud to make that commitment of time and effort to our Society.

I have several areas in which I want to make a major contribution to STC, several ways in which I would like to "make a difference" if I'm elected to the position of 2VP.



Improving Communication

I want to improve communication in all parts of our organization. At a given point in time, there are many (possibly hundreds of) activities being planned, organized, and carried out in STC's chapters, regions, and SIGs. I believe that there are many untapped avenues for sharing information about STC's activities and the work associated with providing them. I believe there are many additional ways in which we can use current technology to share that information within our organization, with industries that are related to our field, and with academic programs that support technical communication.

I believe that improved sharing of information will help STC members get jobs, get *better* jobs, and be better trained for performing their jobs. Providing information about the value of STC to the outside world will bring increased recognition of our field and show that we are a valuable resource to businesses and industry.

Increasing Scholarships

STC's future lies in the abilities of upcoming technical communicators at all ages and all levels of education, and we must strive to better support those future professionals. One key way we can do this is to greatly increase the dollar amounts and number of scholarships that STC gives to technical communication students of all ages. By better preparing those who are entering the technical communication field, we can help ensure that our field and our organization remain relevant and vital as the technical and business environments grow and evolve.

Increasing Research

We need to keep up with—no, get ahead of—technology related to our field. STC needs to greatly increase its support of pertinent, new, technology research in technical communication. Along with our increased support of research, we need to receive from our researchers regular, timely reporting of the status of these projects so we can use the results of their findings as soon as possible.

Increasing the Value of Membership

We need to expand services for our members. We can offer members more training—through STC meetings, seminars, and conferences, for example—so they can get better jobs. Some members are unemployed or think they might be facing unemployment soon. We can and we must provide help to members who are in those positions.

How To Pay for These Things

In an era of shrinking budgets and financial restraint, where can we find the money to support expanded services, increased scholarships, and new and relevant research? I believe that much of the needed funding can come from external fundraising activities. We can and should set up programs for soliciting contributions from industry and academic institutions. We also can solicit funding from STC members who are willing and able to provide additional support for specific projects, such as research or scholarships. STC's new and expanded efforts need not result in increased membership or conference fees if untapped, external, funding sources are found and used.

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February Program

Grant and Proposal Writing

Mark your calendars for the STC/SM February program on Grant and Proposal Writing on Tuesday, February 17. Learn how to use your writing skills to enhance funding and business opportunity for your company. **Freelancers:** learn what it takes to sell grant-writing skills and how you can improve the quality of the proposals you submit to others.

Panelists Mark Clevey from the Small Business Association of Michigan and Lisa Kurek from Biotechnology Business Consultants will provide expertise on writing grants to gain funding for early-stage ideas, while Mary Chmielewicz and Harry de Meijer from Proposal Management Professionals Association will share their experience and insight on the proposal writing process.

Additional information will be released via the listserv, by postcard, and on the chapter Web site (www.stc-sm.org) when it becomes available. We hope to see you there!

Hoffman for 2VP

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My Background—and Your Vote

I have many years of experience in STC as a member and an active volunteer at all levels, including chapter president, Region 4 Director-Sponsor, and Assistant to the President for Communication. I also have served for three years as Communication Director on the board of another non-profit association. It has given me experience that will, I believe, benefit STC as we move forward.

I worked as a technical writer, editor, project manager, and manager of other writers for twenty years. Now I have my own business, editing many different kinds of documents for many different kinds of companies. I also edit doctoral dissertations. I have experience in the business world—working as both a full-time employee and as an entrepreneur in the field.

I encourage you to vote in the upcoming election. I believe our field is very important to industry and that STC is very important to our field. I'm ready to make major contributions of time and effort to help STC grow and prosper and to promote STC as the premier professional association serving the technical communication field.

Professional Liaison News

January Contest Announcement

I just wanted to take the time to thank those individuals who came out to the networking lunch a few weeks ago in Warren. We had a fantastic time discussing the future direction of technical communication and brainstorming about what our chapter could do to provide more value to members. It's clear from our lunch discussion that our members need our chapter to start building more relationships with local businesses NOW!

In an effort to take action, I am asking chapter members to submit to me the names of local companies (and contacts) they know who employ technical communicators. Submit two names or twenty . . . I'll add all of them to a list of local businesses that I've already started compiling. As a chapter, we plan to use this list whenever we have special event announcements, etc.

Oh yes...one more thing...*The member who submits the most contacts by January 31 will receive a prize!* The winner will be announced in February 2004.

Please submit business contact information to profliaison@stc-sm.org in the following format:

Business Name:

Industry:

Contact Name:

If available, email or phone number:

I look forward to further pursuing your chapter needs next year,

Your STC-SM Chapter Professional Liaison

Volunteer Opportunities

This new, ongoing feature of the newsletter will list areas of chapter activities where your help is greatly needed. The Council and Committee Managers are always thinking of ways to improve our chapter and increase its value to you, but we can't do it without your help. There are jobs great and small to be done, and we're always thinking of new ones!

If any of the following sound intriguing to you, please email the addresses below for more info. An inquiry is not a commitment, and duties/tasks are always negotiable!

This month's opportunities are:

Venue Coordinator

Arrange locations and food for each program meeting.

Contact programs@stc-sm.org

Hosts for Detroit/Suburb networking events

Make arrangements with the restaurant, let people know the event is happening, greet people at the event and make them feel welcome.

Contact profliaison@stc-sm.org

Professional Liaison Committee Members

Get in on the ground floor of this exciting new area of activity for our chapter!

Contact profliaison@stc-sm.org

Networking Lunches

STC/SM members gather for lunch each month to meet other technical communicators for professional networking and job sharing information. All interested technical communicators are welcome to attend in addition to STC/SM members. RSVPs are appreciated in order to secure sufficient table space.

Ann Arbor/Washtenaw County

Gatherings start at 11:30 a.m., but arrivals are welcome at any time. Contact Kathy Carter at 734-475-5865 (bluehoo@comcast.net) for more information or to be added to the e-mail reminder list. Kathy Carter and Doug Howell will be hosting the following lunches over the course of the coming year.

Date	Host	Location
Tues. Jan. 13	Kathy Carter	Palio's
Wed. Feb. 11	Doug Howell	Romano's
		Macaroni Grill
Tues. Mar. 9	Kathy Carter	Zingerman's
		Roadhouse
Wed. Apr. 14	Doug Howell	Café Marie
Tues. May 11	Kathy Carter	Paesano's
Wed. June 23	Doug Howell	Olive Garden
Tues. Aug. 10	Kathy Carter	Grizzly Peak
		Brewery

Note that dates and locations are subject to last-minute change.

Networking North

This year we plan to alternate the format of these meetings to draw in larger audiences and better meet the needs of our membership. We decided to host lunch and evening gatherings, and possibly host a book discussion. Providing a mixed format will allow us to bridge the gap between professionals and students, provide a better place for networking, and establish stronger relationships among our members.

If you are interested in hosting a networking meeting or have suggestions for meeting topics, please send an email to profliaison@stc-sm.org.

Lansing Area

We are considering having networking lunches for members, or potential members, who live or work in the Lansing area. If you are interested, please contact Shannon Everhart 800.248.0892 ext.242, or Susan O'Doherty 517.333.0322.

Check it Out!
New, Improved, *Interim*
chapter web site!
www.stc-sm.org

Mystery Photo Contest Continues

Chris Juillet correctly identified former chapter president **Lou Rubino** as the subject of **Mystery Photo #3** in the November-December newsletter. **Mystery Photo #4**, of more recent chapter president **Mike Dailey**, was correctly identified by Karen Gilbert.

Both Chris and Karen win an official STC twist action pen for their efforts!

Each issue of the newsletter for the 2003-2004 program year will contain two mystery photos—one of the old-timers and one of a more current member. The first person to correctly identify everyone in a mystery photo will win a “mystery” prize. If no one can correctly identify everyone in a photo, then the person who correctly identifies the most people in a photo will win.

Contest duration: Until someone wins or until the next issue of the newsletter is published, whichever comes first. One prize per member, per contest year. Winners limited to current members only, and will be announced in the next issue of the newsletter.

To enter the contest, e-mail Mary Jo David with your answers (president@stc-sm.org), or phone and leave a voicemail (734-392-0019). Ties will be broken by the date stamp on the message.

Here are your next two Mystery Photos. Good Luck!

Mystery Photo #5



Mystery Photo #6



**Mystery Photo #3:
Lou Rubino**

**Mystery Photo #4:
Mike Dailey**



January Program Meeting

Keeping Ownership of Multi-Language Projects

You are sitting in an ordinary meeting, in your ordinary conference room, when all of a sudden the topic changes to your company's Mexican (German, Italian, etc.) facilities. And your boss suggests that the latest product information should be provided to the facilities in Spanish (German, Italian). As the lead tech writer, everyone turns to you and says, "Can you translate it?"

What do you say? You took French in high school, more years ago than you care to admit. You've been to Cancun once, but only ordered beer and guacamole. You stop breathing because you just know in today's economy the wrong answer to the "can you" question can translate to unemployment.

Start breathing. Our program in January features Fred Meinberg, president of Techworld Language Services, a company located in Clawson, Michigan, that is focused on providing turnkey translation solutions. Techworld manages writing projects where English documents must be translated to other languages and other languages translated to English.

The truth is, somewhere, somebody has to manage that project. Somebody within the company has to contact the translator, identify the scope of work, manage the creation and delivery of the project, and verify it for completeness. That somebody could be an outside paid consultant, it could be the HR manager, maybe the janitor was in the right place at the right time, or it could be YOU, the technical writer. The communications expert.

But, how do you go from where you are today (knowing only one primary language) to being the translation MVP for your company? Read on:

During his 90 or so minutes on stage, Fred is going to provide us with some great tools to help us, as technical writers, maintain ownership of writing projects in any language within any borders. Some of the topics he will discuss include:

The reality of translation writing—who can and who cannot do translation writing and why. Let's face it, your two years of French won't cut it. But why? And how does knowing this help you impress the decision-makers in your company?

Before you even contact a translator there are key questions that must be answered. Learn what the questions are before it is too late.

You know you need a translator, how do you find one? Learn to qualify and quantify the really good translators easily.

Hey, if you are not the translator what is your role on this project? This is where you become worth your weight in gold. Learn from the expert how to effectively manage and communicate with your translation expert. Effective

project management techniques are the number one factor in the success of a translation project. Learn from Fred's years of experience what it takes to make sure the end deliverable is appropriate and on time.

What should you know about the documentation before you hand it off to a translator? You've spent six months creating the English version and now need to have it translated into Arabic. Will your work effort facilitate this? Fred will explain the pitfalls to avoid when creating the initial documentation.

Finally, the subtle differences between off-shoring and translation writing and how to identify which is actually occurring. This is great knowledge. Is it really off-shoring if a company sends a project to a subsidiary office located overseas? How can you effectively communicate to the right people why American ownership and management is still needed on projects that are created overseas?

Don't let your inability to speak fluently in multiple languages prevent you from maintaining ownership of your company's translation projects. Join us on January 22 and discover ways in which you can position yourself as a key player in the translation game.

* * * * *

Our program will be held on *Thursday, January 22* at Macomb Community College, South Campus, "K" Bldg, Room 324. Macomb Community is located on the south side of 12 Mile Road, between Bunert and Hayes.

Driving Directions:

From the East: Take I-94 to I-696 west. Follow I-696 west to Groesbeck Highway. Go to ** below.

Alternate directions: If you are on I-94 and north of I-696: Exit I-94 at 12 Mile Road and head west three miles. Go to **.

From the West: Take any expressway to I-696 East. Follow I-696 East to Groesbeck Highway. Go to **.

Alternate directions: You can exit at Hoover Road, head north to 12 mile, and follow 12 mile about 2.5 miles to Hayes.

**Exit Groesbeck Highway and turn right (north) onto Groesbeck. Follow Groesbeck to 12 Mile Road. Turn left at 12 Mile and continue west to Hayes (about 1 mile). You must make a "Michigan Left" at 12 Mile and Hayes (Turn north on Hayes to head south). Follow Hayes south past 12 Mile. Turn right at the first set of driveways into the campus that you come to. Park in Lot 5 or 7 (on either side of the driveway). "K" building is located straight ahead.

For a map of the campus, visit <http://www.macomb.edu/Maps/south.asp>. For an area map of the community, visit <http://www.macomb.edu/Maps/campuses.asp>.

Finding and Nominating New STC Associate Fellows

By Nancy J. Hoffman
STC Fellow

Becoming an STC Associate Fellow (ASF) is one of the highest honors that an STC member can receive. Associate Fellow is a membership rank conferred by the STC board of directors to recognize a member's achievements in the field of technical communication and/or exemplary service to STC. Lots of qualified members are out there: Let's go find them!

"To-Do" List for Chapters and Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Develop an ASF search committee. Involve current ASFs or Fellows, if possible, as members or manager of the committee. They can be a valuable resource for finding qualified applicants.

Put the committee to work. Have the committee manager obtain from the STC office a list of all members in the chapter or SIG who have been in STC for 10 or more years. Then the committee should:

Review the requirements for ASF. The basic requirements, as stated in the *STC Bylaws*, are: Active in the field for 15 years, an STC member for 10 years, and either have been responsible for important work in the field and/or have done notable original work that has contributed to the advancement of technical communication and/or have made a significant contribution to the Society.

Download the ASF Nomination Form from the STC web site and check out its required information.

Review the 10-year-plus membership list and narrow it down to members who might be qualified for ASF status.

Contact people for input. Contact members on the narrowed-down list (or people who know a lot about them) to get the required information for the nomination form. Or request information about all of the people on the original list. Don't make any promises; just tell them you're gathering input.

Review the responses. Look for ASF-qualifying elements in the members' information and get more input, if necessary.

Complete an ASF Nomination Form for each recommendation and submit them to the Society's office for consideration by the ASF Nominating

Committee. Submit recommendations only for members who qualify; to make the form as complete as possible, get input from all available sources.

Qualities to Look for in Prospective ASFs

"Ten-year-plus" senior members who might qualify to become ASFs are members who are:

- Highly experienced in the technical communication profession.
- Important contributors to advancements in technical communication.
- Published in both STC and non-STC publications (other than publications for their jobs).
- Very active in their chapters and/or SIGs. Their activities usually include things they've done within their regions, in other regions or SIGs, and possibly in other countries.
- Experienced at serving on Society-level committees, as managers and/or members.
- Experienced at making presentations at chapter and/or SIG meetings, regional conferences, and STC Annual Conferences.
- Recipients of honors and awards from competitions sponsored by STC and related organizations.
- Active in organizations other than STC.
- In touch with chapter and/or SIG leaders as well as past and present STC leaders.

Remember that any senior member can recommend someone for consideration as a potential ASF. While many chapters actively pursue this activity as a way to recognize their members, there is no requirement that ASF nominees be recommended by a chapter or SIG. If you're not involved on an ASF Search Committee and you know a member who might be qualified to become an ASF, follow the above procedures and recommend that person.

Conferring the rank of ASF is an excellent way for STC to recognize its members who have made exemplary contributions to STC and the profession. Let's help STC find qualified nominees for ASF.

Nancy J. Hoffman owns Creekside Communication Services in Ann Arbor, Michigan, providing editorial services to individuals and businesses since 1994. She served as Region 4 Director-Sponsor and as STC Assistant to the President for Communication. She has recommended several STC members for consideration by the ASF Nominating Committee, each of whom are now STC Associate Fellows or Fellows. You can contact Nancy at 734-663-8118 or at creekscom@aol.com.

Dues Renewal Invoices to be Mailed Soon

In October, STC members received e-mails encouraging them to renew their memberships online at www.stc.org. Printed dues renewal invoices will be mailed in late November to those who do not renew online. For membership dues, STC accepts checks in U.S. dollars or Canadian equivalent, and American Express, MasterCard, and VISA payments. Dues payments must be received by January 1, 2004. (A grace period extends to February 28, 2004.) Note that only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2004, will be eligible to vote in STC elections this spring.

Two categories of members do not receive a dues renewal invoice in November: members who join STC on or after November 1, 2003, and sustaining organizations. Sustaining organizations are billed separately in July.

STC 2004 Election

The annual STC election will be held in early 2004, and **only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2004, will be eligible to vote.** An option on the dues renewal forms and new membership applications for 2004 allows members to receive election materials via e-mail. In March, members who selected this option will be e-mailed the slate, candidate biographies, and voting instructions. Members who did not select this option will receive these materials by first-class mail. The election closes April 15.

Be sure to renew by February 28 to have a say in STC's future!



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Networking and Learning Opportunities

January 14, 2004

STC Phone Seminar: Jean-luc Doumont, "Effective Web Sites: Structure, Navigation, and Graphics"
www.stc.org/seminars.asp

January 22, 2004

STC Monthly Program Meeting, "Keeping Ownership of Multi-Language Projects."

See page 7 for details

January 26-30, 2004

"Adobe FrameMaker for a New Era: Navigating the Changing Seas of Publishing," presented in Livonia by Bright Path Solutions.
www.travelthepath.com

January 28, 2004

STC Phone Seminar: Saul Carliner, "Demonstrating the Value of Technical Communication Products and Services"
www.stc.org/seminars.asp

February 7-11, 2004

American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) TechKnowledge 2004 Conference and Exposition, Anaheim Marriott Hotel, California.

ASTD
(703) 683-8100
(703) 683-8103 (fax)
www.astd.org

February 11, 2004

STC Phone Seminar: Lance Gelein, "Don't Make Me Do That! Making Learning Fun and Engaging"
www.stc.org/seminars.asp

February 17, 2004

STC Monthly Program Meeting, "Grant and Proposal Writing."

See page 4 for details

February 26, 2004

STC Phone Seminar: Whitney Quesenbery, "Designing Web Applications"
www.stc.org/seminars.asp

April 17, 2004

Region 4 Conference

"Writers Without Borders"

Hosted by the Pittsburgh Chapter

8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Holiday Inn Select

University Center, Oakland

Technical communicators today do the traditional - write books, online help, white papers and requirements and specifications documents - as well as the untraditional - serve as usability experts, user interface designers, marketing support and internal consultants. They also explore, embrace and implement new technologies to improve their product deliverables as well as their efficiency. This one-day mini conference explores some "out of the box" roles that technical communicators perform today, looks at the latest technology trends and examines aspects of technical communication you may want to consider in the future.

February 27-28, 2004

Atlanta Chapter STC will hold its annual regional conference, "Currents," at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. Topic stems include learning new skills and tools, contracting, satisfying users, education/professional development, and management.

Cheri Crider
ccrider@optiosoftware.com
www.stcatlanta.org

March 10, 2004

STC Phone Seminar: Seth Maislin, "Keywords for Indexing and Search"
www.stc.org/seminars.asp

March 24, 2004

STC Phone Seminar: Judith Herr, "Winning New Business: Preparing and Submitting Proposals 101B"
www.stc.org/seminars.asp

51st Annual Conference

STC's annual conference is the world's largest gathering of technical communicators. Among the many highlights of the conference are educational sessions, workshops, vendor exhibits, and displays of the winning entries of the Society's international competitions. Technical communication professionals also benefit from numerous networking opportunities and employment resources. In addition, STC chapters organize regional conferences to address the specific needs of technical communicators in a particular geographic area.

May 9-12, 2004

Baltimore, MD

July 1-3, 2004

The Research and Training Institute of the East Aegean (INEAG, Samos Island, Greece) and the University College of the Fraser Valley (British Columbia, Canada) will hold the Fifth International Conference on Information Communication Technologies in Education on Samos Island, Greece. The conference will provide an overview of current thinking and practices in applications of technology to education. For more information, please contact INEAG, icicte@ineag.gr or www.ineag.gr/icicte

July 25-27, 2004

Sacramento Chapter STC will host the STC Region 8 Conference at the University of California, Davis. The conference will feature seminars, a regional leadership summit, and a trade show and career expo.

Eric Butow
ceo@butow.net
www.stcregion8conference.org



“Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication”

www.stc.org

TECHcomments

The newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

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**Deadline:
February 10**

**March-April
issue of **TECH**comments**

E-mail submissions to
Newsletter@stc-sm.org

STC/SM Leadership 2003-2004

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