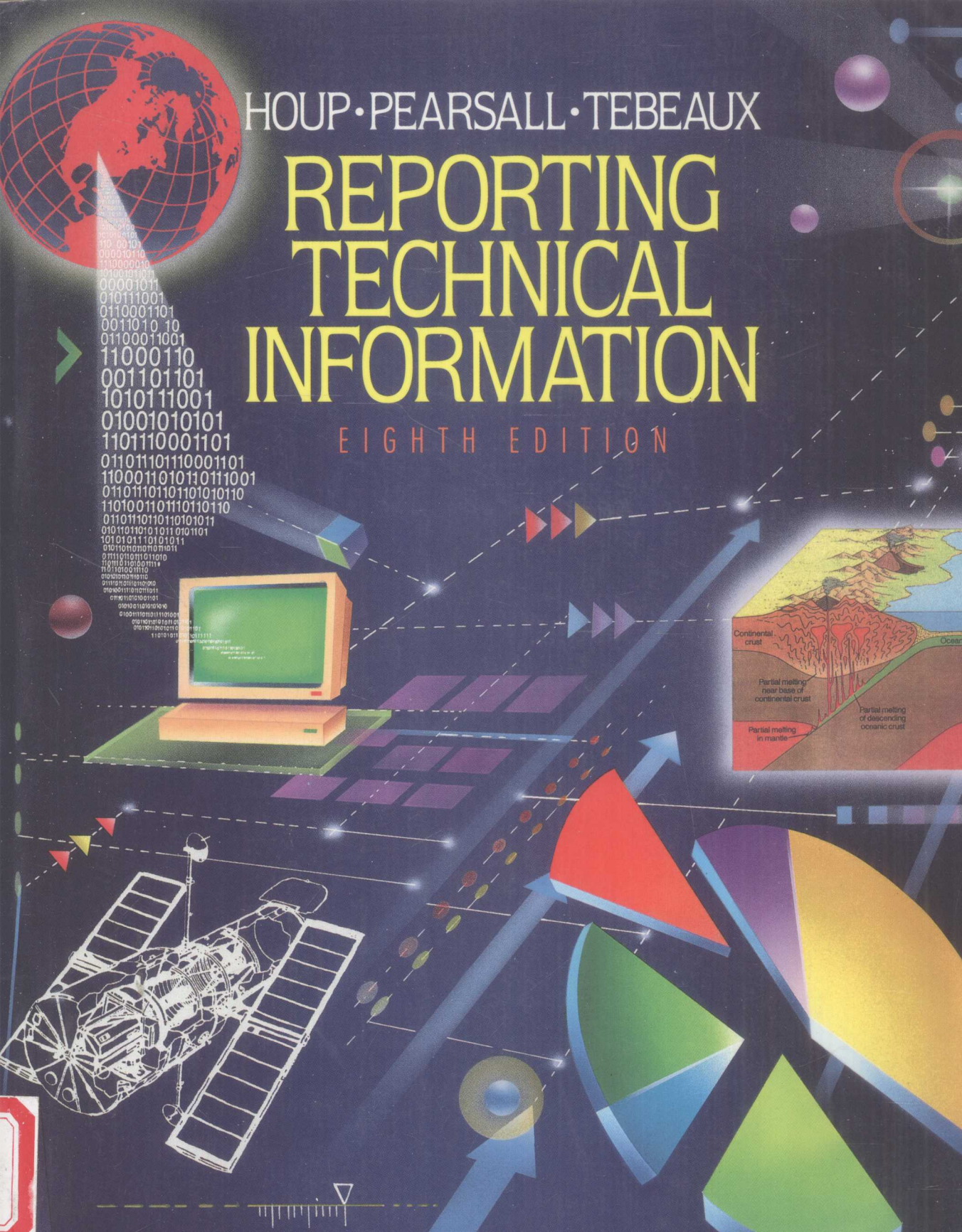


# REPORTING TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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**Kenneth W. Houp**

*Late, The Pennsylvania State University*

**Thomas E. Pearsall**

*Emeritus, University of Minnesota*

**Elizabeth Tebeaux**

*Texas A&M University*

**Contributing Author: Janice C. Redish**

*President, Redish & Associates, Inc.  
Bethesda, Maryland*

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*For Eben W. Ludlow—editor and friend*

# PREFACE

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With this eighth edition, we bring aboard a new member of the *Reporting Technical Information* team: Elizabeth Tebeaux, Professor of English at Texas A&M and President of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing. Professor Tebeaux has long been active in the teaching, scholarship, and administration of technical communication. She agrees thoroughly with the long-standing objectives of *Reporting Technical Information*:

Our readers should be able to analyze a writing situation correctly; to find and organize material appropriate to audience, purpose, and situation; to design a functional report or letter that answers the needs of both writers and readers; and to write that report or letter correctly, clearly, and persuasively.

Janice C. Redish, President of Redish & Associates, Inc., serves once again as a contributing author.

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## Plan of the Book

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This is what you will find in the eighth edition.

**Chapter 1, “An Overview of Technical Writing.”** Chapter 1 defines technical writing and describes the world of workplace writing—the forms that technical reporting takes and the problems that writers of technical information encounter.

**Part I: Basics.** In Part I, emphasis falls on the composing process. Chapter 2, “Composing,” discusses how to analyze a writing situation; how to discover, arrange, write, revise, and edit the information you will need; and how to deal with ethical concerns. With this chapter begins the emphasis on audi-



ence that is central to this book. Chapter 3, “Writing Collaboratively,” deals with how to compose technical writing in collaboration with others. Chapter 4, “Writing for Your Readers,” discusses some of the ways you can adapt your writing to various audiences. Finally, Chapter 5, “Achieving a Readable Style,” shows you how paying attention to elements of your style at the paragraph, sentence, and language levels can make your writing more readable.

**Part II: Techniques.** In Part II we build on the basic concepts of Part I. The three chapters in Part II describe and demonstrate the techniques you will need to inform, describe, define, and argue. With these techniques you can arrange, draft, and revise much of the writing you will do as a professional in your field. As in Part I, we emphasize the need to consider audience and purpose no matter what technique you are using. With the techniques you master in Part II, you will have many of the skills you will need to apply in writing documents such as instructions, proposals, and feasibility reports, the subjects of Part IV, “Applications.”

**Part III: Document Design.** Part III deals with document design and graphics. Good design—creating a format that helps readers find information and read selectively—is vitally important in technical writing. Chapter 9, “Document Design,” deals primarily with the format and appearance of the document. Chapter 10, “Design Elements of Reports,” tells you how to construct all those elements that full reports need, such as covers, tables of contents, abstracts, introductions, discussions, summaries, and notes. Chapter 11, “Graphical Elements,” tells you how to use tables, graphs, drawings, and photographs to inform your reader about such things as concepts, processes, trends, relationships, and objects. Technical writing is marked by an extensive use of graphics.

**Part IV: Applications.** The first six chapters of Part IV put all the basics, techniques, design features, and graphics of the first three parts to work. The chapters of Part IV discuss correspondence, the job hunt, and reports such as feasibility reports, instructions, progress reports, and proposals. Chapters 14 and 15, in particular, show you how to deal with any kind of report, no matter what it is called. Chapter 18 discusses how to put the principles and techniques of this book to work in oral reports. In short, Part IV covers most of the kinds of reports, written and spoken, that professionals in every field have to deliver.

**Part V: Handbook.** Any living language is a growing, flexible instrument with rules that are constantly changing by virtue

of the way it is used by its live, independent speakers and writers. Only the rules of a dead language are unalterably fixed. Nevertheless, at any point in a language's development, certain conventions of usage are in force. Certain constructions are considered errors that mark the person who uses them as uneducated. It is with these conventions and errors that this handbook primarily deals. We also include sections on outlining and avoiding sexist language.

**Appendixes.** Appendix A guides you to technical reference sources in your own field. Appendix B is a bibliography that leads you to other sources for the many subjects covered in *Reporting Technical Information*.

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## Major Changes in the Eighth Edition

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- Ethical considerations are now introduced in Chapter 2, "Composing." Technical writing often has consequences for large numbers of people; therefore, technical writers have to learn to deal with ethical considerations as a part of the composing process. This new section makes this important point.
- Chapter 4, "Writing for Your Readers," has been totally reorganized. In earlier editions, the emphasis in the chapter was on four kinds of audiences: lay, executive, technicians, and experts. These audiences are still present in the chapter, but the chapter is no longer organized around them. Rather the chapter is organized around universal considerations such as point of view, providing background, and style. This change should provide more flexibility for users of this chapter.
- Chapter 9, "Document Design," now contains more examples that show differences in documents when principles of good design are omitted and when they are used. Also, exercises at the end of the chapter provide practice in redesigning for better reader accessibility to reports.
- Chapter 14, "Development of Reports," and Chapter 15, "Development of Analytical Reports," are new chapters that emphasize that effective reports respond to context and that graphics and page design must be considered in report development. The new chapters make clear that while generic reports such as feasibility reports do exist, technical writers must also learn to develop reports that do not fit cleanly into some generic category.

Besides these major changes, numerous small changes in style and substance have been made. We have added fresh examples from the

many fields that users of this text represent. In particular, you will find many fresh examples in Chapter 11, "Graphical Elements." The four-color graphics insert in this chapter contains all new examples. We have updated Appendix A, "Technical Reference Books and Guides," particularly the section on computerized information retrieval. In short, we have followed our touchstone that all writing is subject to infinite improvement. We invite teachers and students to use our E-mail address—[tpearsall@aol.com](mailto:tpearsall@aol.com)—to send us comments and suggestions.

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## Teaching Ancillaries

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With this eighth edition, we continue to offer extensive teaching aids.

- An expanded Instructor's Manual with transparency masters and tests. The revised manual, co-authored with Professor Richard Raymond of Armstrong State College, includes advice on course planning, sample syllabi, suggested examination questions, and, for each chapter, teaching objectives, teaching hints, a discussion of exercises and assignments, a chapter quiz, transparency masters, and exercise solutions.
- A set of fifty two-color transparency acetates. The transparencies display both existing text figures and new student examples.

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## Acknowledgments

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Detailed acknowledgments to the many sources we have drawn upon for this book are found in our "Chapter Notes." We thank the colleagues who took the time to review our work and make so many useful suggestions: Virginia A. Book, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; David E. Boudreaux, Nicholls State University; Jerry Harris, DeVry Institute of Technology, Chicago; Timothy C. Kennedy, Oregon State University; Andrew Linder, DeVry Institute of Technology, Toronto; Paul Meyer, New Mexico State University; Joe Nickell, University of Kentucky; Anita C. Nordbrock, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Prescott Campus; Sandra Manoogian Pearce, Moorhead State University; Carolyn Plumb, University of Washington; Brenda R. Sims, University of North Texas; Valerie J. Vance, Oregon Institute of Technology.

Donald J. Barrett, Chief Reference Librarian, United States Air Force Academy, has once again revised Appendix A, "Technical Reference Books and Guides," for us, and Professor James Connolly, University of Minnesota, has again contributed the section on visuals found in Chapter 18, "Oral Reports."



*Reporting Technical Information* has had the good fortune to have two of college publishing's best editors, Madalyn Stone and Eben W. Ludlow, to aid in the development of this book. Pat Smythe has once again furnished a design that is both efficient and attractive. Finally, we express our love and gratitude to our spouses, Anne and William Jene, for their loving and loyal support.

*Thomas E. Pearsall*  
*Elizabeth Tebeaux*

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