

TENTH EDITION



TENTH EDITION

Reporting Technical Information

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New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
2002

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Buenos Aires Calcutta
Cape Town Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul
Karachi Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai
Nairobi Paris São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw

and associated companies in

Berlin Ibadan

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Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.

198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

<http://www.oup-usa.org>

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pearsall, Thomas E.

Reporting technical information / Thomas E. Pearsall, Elizabeth Tebeaux, Sam
Dragga.—10th ed.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of: Reporting technical information / Kenneth W. Houpp, c1998.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-19-514612-3 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Technical writing. I. Tebeaux, Elizabeth. II. Dragga, Sam. III. Houpp, Kenneth W.,
1913- Reporting technical information. IV. Title.

T11 .P3925 2001

808'.066—dc21

00-053079

Printing number: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Printed in the United States of America

on acid-free paper.

Preface

Reporting Technical Information has a new publisher, Oxford University Press. In 1999 our former publisher, Allyn & Bacon, was bought by an English firm, Pearson Education. As part of its conditions for approving the sale, the U.S. Department of Justice required Allyn & Bacon to divest itself of some of its most successful books. *Reporting Technical Information* was one of the books divested and was ultimately bought by Oxford. We are happy in our new home and look forward to a long relationship.

Also, we now welcome Professor Sam Dragga, formerly a contributor to *Reporting Technical Information*, as a full coauthor. Professor Dragga, an accomplished teacher and researcher of technical writing and a former president of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, has made major contributions to this tenth edition.

► **CHANGES TO THE TENTH EDITION**

In keeping with our touchstone that all writing is subject to infinite improvement, we have freshened many examples and made many small changes in style and substance in this edition. We have also made some major changes. This tenth edition has four new chapters and four thoroughly rewritten chapters.

New Chapters

Chapter 6, Writing Ethically To aid the teaching of ethics in the classroom, we have expanded the material on ethics from the ninth edition and made it into a separate chapter. The new chapter includes illustrative material from the codes of various professional groups, such as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. The chapter tells readers where they can go online for more information on ethics and provides realistic exercises dealing with ethical dilemmas. When appropriate, other chapters deal with ethics as well; see for example, Chapter 12, Using Illustrations.

Chapter 7, Writing for International Readers Reflecting the increasing globalization of business and technology, this chapter provides a concise but comprehensive introduction to the differences among world cultures and the effects of the differences on communication. The chapter

covers such issues as the importance of personal relationships, individualism versus collectivism, differing views of truth, and the power and value of time. Included as part of the chapter is an extensive bibliography that encourages further study. When appropriate, information and exercises dealing with international differences are also included in other chapters.

Chapter 8, Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Information This new chapter helps students in formulating their research questions and then guides them to sources of information, such as interviewing, the electronic library catalog, indexes, and the Internet. The chapter pays particular attention to evaluating information, especially that information found on the Internet.

Chapter 17, Empirical Research Reports In response to many reviewer suggestions, we have broken empirical research reports out into a separate chapter. We have also provided a complete empirical research report as an example.

Rewritten Chapters

Four existing chapters have been extensively rewritten.

Chapter 4, Writing for Your Readers We now use six on-the-job situations to help students deal with such questions as these: Who will read your message? How technical should you be in explaining your situation? What is your purpose in writing? What is your business relationship to the reader?

Chapter 12, Using Illustrations This chapter offers the latest information on constructing and using visual aids. It provides numerous examples of both good and inadequate visuals, with appropriate commentary. The chapter concludes with an extensive section on how to avoid constructing graphs that violate principle of ethics.

Chapter 13, Correspondence This chapter offers advice on when to use e-mail rather than conventional letters and memos and describes how to conduct correspondence in all three formats.

Chapter 14, The Strategies and Communications of the Job Hunt We recognize that most people now gather needed information about jobs and potential employers from the Internet rather than from print sources, and we advise students accordingly.

Appendixes We have also reorganized and rewritten portions of our appendixes. Appendix A, Handbook, now deals exclusively with the conven-

tions of usage and punctuation. Appendix B, Formal Elements of Technical Documents, is divided into five sections: Report Format, Letter and Memorandum Format, Documentation, Designing a World Wide Web Site, and Outlining. The two appendixes should provide ready reference for students who need help in these matters.

Finally, before each chapter you will find what we have called a scenario. Each scenario depicts a situation in which the student will use the information illustrated in the chapter in an on-the-job context. We hope that these realistic vignettes will help students understand how the skills and techniques they are learning transcend the academic environment. For the total plan of the tenth edition, please see the table of contents.

► **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The chapter notes provide detailed acknowledgments of the many sources we have used in this edition. In addition, we thank the many colleagues who took time to review our work and make many useful suggestions, in particular, the following: Carol A. Serf, The Georgia Institute of Technology; Marilyn Sandidge, Westfield State College; Dave Clark, Iowa State University; Cecelia Hawkins, Texas A & M University; and Randal Woodland, University of Michigan–Dearborn. We also thank Professor James Connally, University of Minnesota, for his contributions to Chapter 19, Oral Reports. We thank our new editor at Oxford University Press, Tony English, for his thoughtful assistance. Finally, we express our love and gratitude to our spouses, Anne, William Jene, and Linda, for their loving and loyal support.

► **AN INVITATION**

We invite students and teachers to send comments and suggestions directly to Tom Pearsall at his e-mail address: tpearsall@aol.com

Thomas E. Pearsall
Elizabeth Tebeaux
Sam Dragga

Reporting Technical Information

SCENARIO

You are an engineer for General Power Equipment, Inc. Your work is mainly in research and development. GPE is a medium-sized company that makes machinery powered by small engines and motors, such as lawn mowers, power generators, and pumps. GPE has recently acquired North Star Snow Throwers, an acquisition that seems likely to fit well with the company's other products.

Helen Bergen, the vice president for research and development, has been given the task of integrating North Star into GPE. She asks you to come to a meeting in her office. When you enter her office, you find Jack Kumagai, of GPE's legal staff already there.

Helen greets you, but she has a worried look on her face. She has some printouts in front of her. "Jack and I have just been going over this information that I got off the Web," she says. "Do you know that snow throwers are an open invitation to litigation? Listen to this:

"Last year there were over a thousand amputations caused by snow throwers and over 5,000 emergency room visits resulting from their use. These things kill people. People get caught in them or run them in the garage and die from carbon monoxide."

"Are North Star snow throwers more dangerous than any other?" you ask.

"Not really," answers Jack. "but the warnings on their machines and the instructions in their manuals are inadequate in my opinion."

"That's where you come in," Helen says to you. "We want to avoid litigation, sure, but what we really want is for people to use any of our products safely. Work with Jack. Write warnings that really do the job. Write a manual that makes safe operations of these things as foolproof as possible." She smiles and adds, "When you're finished with the manual, put your engineer's hat back on and work on making these machines safer."

Warnings and manuals are just two of the many things you may have to do in technical communication. This first chapter introduces you to that world in a general way. The chapters that follow show you how to do manuals and warnings and much more.

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