

Los Angeles Chapter
June 1999

The Technograph

LASTC Elects New Officers

By Vivian Ware

The ballots are in! We are pleased to announce the 1999-2000 elected council members and their plans for LASTC in the year ahead.

Jack Molisani, president, recognizes that most presidents who lead organizations are looking to take them to the next level of their potential and admits he wishes to do the same for LASTC. "Most presidents have the same goals: to provide the chapter with the tools, technology, and educational opportunities that we can afford to give them," said Molisani. Molisani identified some areas of opportunity for our organization, and he hopes to tap into the existing talent base to realize those ideas. For example, providing lost-cost classes in RoboHelp, HTML, and FrameMaker, by having members who use these tools teach classes.

"I hope to increase the number of people volunteering. One problem is we have too few people doing too much." Everyone should expect to be called on to help our organization reach the next level. Membership is very important to Molisani and to our organization's vitality. Molisani recognizes that everyone joins STC for their own reasons, and people stay and leave for a variety of reasons, but if we are to grow as an organization, we have to pool our talents, resources, and experiences. "We have two distinct publics that we have to cater to: people who've been around for awhile and are seasoned professionals and the

new generation of writers coming in. There's got to be some way to cater to both groups without losing either. It could be something as simple as every other month, we do an entry-level topic, and the other month, we do an advanced topic," said Molisani.

Suzanne Ferrell, our newly elected treasurer, says her fundamental objective is "to keep the books in order." Ferrell is not a typical accountant-type, but she is very

serious about money. Ferrell's first step will be to identify if the organization is currently making money. "And if we are making money, analyze some possibilities on how that money could be spent and present those options to the membership for a vote," said

Ferrell. Ferrell strongly believes that our organization

should support scholarships and aid to aspiring technical writers, along with spending monies on things that encourage members to attend functions and participate in events that expand their knowledge base as technical communicators. When asked how she planned to keep the membership apprised of the financial condition of the organization she replied, "Possibly a financial report on a quarterly basis in the STC newsletter." As a person who enjoys doing research and writing reports, this position would seem to capitalize on Ferrell's skills. STC can only



From left: Incoming council members Betsy Suttle, Jack Molisani, and Esther Spachner

What's Inside

2 President's Message

3 Newsbriefs

4 Members Speak!

5 April Meeting Review
June Meeting Preview

6 Web Site O' the Month

7 Calendar of Events

Visit our Web Site:
<http://stc.org/region8/lac/www/lahome.htm>

See Election, page 7

Memoirs of a President

By Karen Bergen

With mixed emotions, I'm writing my last column as your LASTC president: relief at coming to the end of two long years, satisfaction with all that we accomplished, and, mainly, gratitude to all the wonderful people I've been privileged to work with.

Membership Vice President **Eugene Morrison** welcomed new members, recruited potential members, and encouraged existing members with his enthusiastic pep talks and famous smile. He led the resume panel at our October meeting, and his letter-writing campaign last February boosted our renewal rate to 76%, among the highest in the society.

Treasurer **Carolyn O'Connor** organized our finances and managed our budget with more efficiency than we've had in years. In spite of the inevitable last-minute panic, she patiently handled reservations and check-in for all our monthly meetings.

Madhu Malik, Chapter secretary, set new standards of accuracy and completeness in Council Meeting minutes, maintained our roster, monitored the voice mail, and graciously assisted in many other ways (free samples from Nestle's).

Christine Stevens produced our award-winning *Technograph* with the help of copyeditor Esther Spachner, staff writer Vivian Ware, and her many contributors. She is also the "driving force" behind our Region 8 Conference, which is now taking shape. Christine's ability to cheerfully juggle her many responsibilities has been truly awe-inspiring.

PR Manager **Pam Wilkes** effectively publicized our meetings and other events, winning our first award in the STC Public Relations competition. Pam was always available to help out, whether to review resumes or schlep supplies to the El Segundo library.

Community Service Manager **Amy Dolcourt** initiated a new program of outreach activities for our chapter, with raffles, KCET pledge drives, and other worthwhile projects.

George Harmon managed our Technical Art Competition, recruited the judges, and presented the awards at our Competition Banquet last March. **Brian McGovney** received and tracked the entries.

Will Soper designed and produced the eye-catching flyers for our education programs and became the Publications Coordinator for the upcoming Region 8 Conference.

Education Manager **Lisa Gottlieb** worked hard at setting up classes, and made sure our flyers and brochures were displayed at chapter meetings. **Victoria Uytana** worked with Lisa as long as her health permitted.

See President, page 6

The Technograph

Managing Editor

Christine Stevens
cni@iname.com
(310) 216-0816

Copy Editor

Esther Spachner

The Technograph is published 10 times a year by the Los Angeles chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (LASTC) to disseminate information regarding chapter, society, and industry events.

The editorial staff welcomes articles, calendar items, letters, and advertising from readers. The deadline for submissions is the first of the previous month.

Articles should be 250-1,000 words and must be submitted electronically to the editor. The editor reserves the right to edit articles to fit available space. Other STC chapters may reprint articles if credit is given and the editor is sent a copy.

To advertise in *The Technograph*, send electronic or camera-ready material to the editor by the first of the preceding month. We offer reasonable rates (discounts available to repeat advertisers):

Full page	\$100
Half page	65
Third page	50
Quarter page	40
Sixth page	30
Eighth page	20

The Technograph is available for \$12 a year to non-members and members of other chapters.

STC is a nonprofit individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the art and science of technical communication. It is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 18,000 members include technical writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, multimedia artists, and others whose work involves making technical information available to those who need it. For membership information, contact STC international headquarters:

Society for Technical Communication
901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1854
Phone: (703) 522-4114
Fax: (703) 522-2075
Web site: www.stc.org

1998-99 LASTC Council

President

Karen Bergen
Kbergen@aol.com
(310) 782-4038

Vice President, Membership

Eugene Morrison
eugene.morrison@prodigy.net
(213) 299-0054

Secretary

Madhu Malik
madhum@jps.net
(310) 326-7020

Treasurer

Carolyn O'Connor
coconnor@flash.net
(310) 265-9676

Internet Manager

Tom Magnus
Tom@mrwrite.com
(310) 318-9100

Mentor Program Manager

Steve Zirl, Szirlstc@aol.com
(213) 662-4087

Public Relations Manager

Pam Wilkes, pmlawilkes@aol.com
(310) 470-0696

Community Service Manager

Amy Dolcourt
Amy_Dolcourt@XonTech.com
(310) 737-1795

Database Manager

Melissa Stoller
melissa@stollerdesign.com
(310) 390-6880

Education Manager

Lisa Gottlieb, ndull@aol.com
(310) 455-1651

Society for Technical Communication

Los Angeles Chapter
P.O. Box 91400
Los Angeles, CA 90009
(213) 896-2982

<http://stc.org/region8/lac/www/lahome.htm>

Newsbriefs

- With great sadness we note the death of **Victoria Uytana**, a member of our chapter for the past 2 years who worked on our Education Committee. Victoria arranged and publicized a number of our classes, generously contributing her time to LASTC during the last months of her life. At her family's request, LASTC has made a donation to the Lupus Foundation of America in Victoria's memory.
- The *Jobs Rated Almanac* (St. Martin's Griffin, New York) **ranked technical writing 14th** in its evaluation of 250 common jobs (and some not-so-common jobs like US president, astronaut, and cowboy). Professions were judged by six core factors: environment, income, outlook, physical demands, security, and stress. Written by Les Krantz, the almanac predicts that openings in our field will be widely available in heavily industrialized areas such as the western United States. The almanac also forecasts a low unemployment rate and a job growth rate of 105% through 2005.
- **STC book reviews**, as published in *Technical Communication*, are now available on the society's Web site at <http://www.stc-va.org>. To access the reviews, first select the Publications button on the left-hand side of the home page. Select the underlined STC Press button at the top of the publications page. Next, select the Book Reviews link. All reviewed publications are available by selecting Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble Web sites as noted on the main Book Reviews page.
- **Congratulations** to *The Technograph* editorial staff on its recent Merit award in STC's International Newsletter Competition. *The Technograph* won the society's equivalent of third place in Category 2 (chapters with 151-300 members) for the September, October, and November 1998 issues. The winning issues will be on display (along with other publications competition winners) at the 1999 Region 8 Conference, which is being sponsored by LASTC and is to be held November 11-14 in Long Beach. Orange County, Santa Barbara, and San Fernando Valley also won awards for their chapter newsletters.
- Complete the **newsletter questionnaire** inserted into this issue of *The Technograph*. Your response will help the editorial staff produce even better issues.
- **LASTC had a membership renewal rate of 76%** in 1999, one of the highest of STC's 142 chapters. As of March 1999, STC had 18,424 members, nearly 300 of which list LASTC as their home chapter.
- LASTC will be hosting its **annual volunteer party** on Saturday, June 19, at 7 PM in West LA. Call Jack Molisani to RSVP and to obtain directions, (323) 874-1435.
- **"Marketing Yourself as a Consultant,"** sponsored by the SGVSTC Consulting SIG, will be held Wednesday, June 16, from 6:30 to 8 PM. A panel of three experienced independent consultants will be presenting their successful, and not so successful, approaches to marketing their consulting services in the corporate arena. Come prepared with questions. RSVP/questions, please e-mail Patti Sweetman at psweetman@earthlink.net or page her at (909) 482-2504. See Calendar of Events, page 7, for location.
- **For Sale:** STC Annual Conference Proceedings, from 1989 to 1997. \$10 each, or \$50 for the set. Call or e-mail: (310) 376-0113, karenaxelrod@earthlink.net
- The Phoenix chapter is hosting the **STC Region 5 Conference** October 14-16, 1999, at the Grace Inn in Ahwatukee, Arizona (near Tempe). The call for presentations is available on the chapter web site (www.stc-phoenix.com). Ω

Visit the Technical Book
Company
2056 Westwood Blvd.
LA 90025

(800) 233-5150

View the Tech Standards Web
site at www.tecstandards.com

(800) 889-7116

Members Speak!

By Jack Molisani

Several months ago, LASTC's council polled its members on their preferences for meeting locations, topics, and formats. Here, the incoming LASTC president presents the results of that survey.

Every once in awhile, I stop and think how fortunate I am to be born and raised in the United States, one of the truly democratic countries in the world. And because I value my freedom, I made a decision many years ago that any time I could vote on an issue I would—because I could.

Every year, the chapter officers survey members on what they want in terms of programs and meeting locations. Here are the results of this year's survey. I would like to thank everyone who responded to this year's LASTC member survey. Your opinion counts. Many thanks also to Tom Wilson who tabulated the survey data.

We received 76 responses to the survey, about 25% of the membership.

Which topics do you wish to hear more about at monthly meetings?

Web page design and development: 53%
Web-based delivery of information: 43%
Consulting and contracting issues: 42%
FrameMaker, PageMaker, or other page layout tools: 42%
Career and job search (resumes, portfolios, interviewing, etc.): 41%
Computer maintenance for technical communicators: 39%
Graphic design and visual communication: 38%
Computer-based training: 37%
HTML: 37%
Adobe Acrobat: 36%
Editing: 36%
HTML Help: 34%
Information design: 32%
Multimedia: 32%
RoboHelp or other online help development tools: 32%

While other topics were selected, fewer

than 30% of the respondents voted for them.

What's your favorite type of meeting?

Drinks & hors d'oeuvres: 32%
Dinner: 21%
Less expensive dinner: 20%
No food: 20%

Since 41% of the respondents wanted some sort of dinner, this will probably stay the main format of the meetings. However, we'll see what we can do to make the meals more cost-effective.

How often do you attend monthly meetings?

Very seldom: 39%
3 - 4 times a year: 18%
6 - 8 times a year: 14%
Every time: 7%

What keeps you from attending?

Not interested in speaker or topic: 34%
Bad location: 21%
Costs too much: 17%
Bad time or day of the week: 18%
Our meetings run too late: 8%

When you attend a meeting, what brings you?

Interesting topic: 71%
Network with others in general: 43%
Interesting speaker: 42%
Network with others to get work: 37%
Job announcements: 24%
Meet (new) friends: 20%

I find these questions interesting because they shed light on who does and who does not attend the meetings regularly. Before I discuss specifics, let me point out that there

See Survey, page 6

How to Win at Office Politics

Do rumors about downsizing and reorganization fly around your company? Does capitol hill intrigue seem tame compared to the political climate in your office? If so, you'll want to attend our June meeting. Lance Gelein, immediate past president of STC International, will tell us how technical communicators can win at the game of office politics.

Always a dynamic speaker, Gelein will cover the inevitability of office politics and offer suggestions on how to deal with them. The presentation will include a self-test that you can use to evaluate the political climate of your company.

Having just completed his term of office as international president, Gelein will share his knowledge gathered over the course of a 20-year career in technical communication. If you missed his presentation last December, this is your chance to learn from one of our most inspiring leaders.

June is our last meeting of the season. We'll honor our volunteers, present chapter awards, and install our new officers. Meet your chapter and society leaders while you enjoy live music and a festive banquet. Join the party as we celebrate the end of an award-winning year for LASTC.

Schedule for June 29 Meeting

6:00 PM Networking and check-in, with live music

7:00 PM Dinner

7:45 Announcements and employment exchange

8:15 Awards Presentation, Installation of Officers, and Program

Location

Wyndham Garden Hotel, 5990 Green Valley Circle, Culver City

From the 405 northbound, exit at Slauson-Sepulveda and turn right on Green Valley Circle. From the 405 southbound, exit at Hughes Parkway-Sepulveda, turn right on Sepulveda, then right on Green Valley Circle.

Cost and Reservations

Members with reservations: \$21

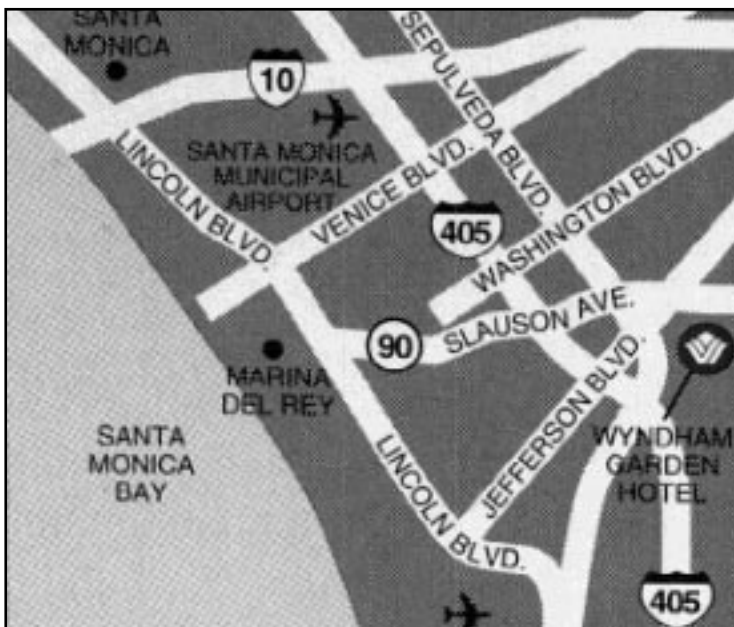
Nonmembers with reservations: \$23

Without reservations: \$30

Program only: \$10

Students/Retirees: \$5

To make or cancel a reservation, call LASTC's voice mail at (213) 896-2982 no later than 5 PM, Friday, June 25. Ω



Computer Maintenance Made Easy . . . Almost

Don Gardiner, the featured speaker at the April monthly meeting, explained computer maintenance to an audience of nearly 50. The basic message he imparted was that computers are not easy to use and they are not intuitive. He stressed the importance of keeping things simple when dealing with computers and offered several useful tips:

- Buy computers from Dell, Gateway, or Micron. Avoid stores like Best Buy. They sell only "second tier" machines.
- Have two copies of backups at all times. Gardiner recommended Omega's Ditto Drive Pro.
- Increasing RAM is the single best thing you can do for your computer.
- Separate data from your applications. All programs should be in a Programs folder.
- NT is better than Windows 95. For Internet service providers, Gardiner recommended Earthlink.
- Each time you relaunch an application, you deplete memory, so don't quit a program until you know for certain that you're finished. Ω



Don Gardiner, the speaker at the April LASTC meeting, offered many useful computer maintenance tips.

Survey (continued from page 4)

are two ways of looking at this survey data: There are people who might attend more often if the council did a better job of meeting their needs. And then there are people who are probably not going to attend meetings anyway, so we should concentrate on answering the needs of those who do attend the meetings.

With that said, it looks like the main reason people do or do not attend is whether or not the meeting topic is interesting. Since we now have your preferences on meeting topics (at least 76 of you), the programs committee will be sure to schedule speakers who can address these particular topics.

Which community do you live and/or work in, or are closest to? ("H" for home, "W" for work)

West L.A. area: H-13, W-9

South Bay: H-11, W-8

Torrance: H-8, W-8

San Fernando Valley: H-4, W-6

Long Beach: H-1, W-9

Glendale: H-3, W-3

Pasadena: H-2, W-2

LAX area: H-2, W-4

Santa Monica: H-1, W-3

If you consider the top three answers were...

West L.A. area: 22

South Bay: 19

Torrance: 16

...it's not surprising that meeting somewhere in the middle (the LAX area) was the top choice in meeting locations.

Where would you like us to meet?

LAX area: 17%

South Bay: 13%

West L.A.: 7%

Santa Monica: 5%

Culver City: 3%

Torrance: 3%

As incoming president for 1999-2000, I want to make sure the council is meeting the needs of the chapter, so don't be surprised to see some follow-on surveys in the coming months. And remember, your vote counts! **Ω**

Jack Molisani is LASTC's incoming president and the founder and president of Clarity Authoring Services Inc., a technical communication and placement firm.

Molisani is also the chairman of the 2000 STC Pan-Pacific Conference. He can be reached at (323) 874-1435, by e-mail at jmolisani@ClarityAuthoring.com, and by web at www.ClarityAuthoring.com.

Web Site O' the Month

Two web sites to check out this month:

<http://stc.org/region8/conferences/www/index.html>, the official Web site of the 1999 Region 8 Conference, has proposal submittal information for prospective speakers, hotel information, and registration fees. Check it regularly for conference updates!

www.careers.wsj.com, the interactive version of the *Wall Street Journal*, offers tons of helpful information to job seekers. The site features employment trends, salary surveys, a career bookstore, and up-to-date employment listings from dozens of major companies. Use the "salary calculator" to compare the cost of living in hundreds of US and international cities.

President (continued from page 2)

Melissa Stoller designed and created our new membership database. She's now working on a questionnaire that we'll use to gather more information for our chapter survey and directory.

Betsy Suttle made hotel and dining arrangements for our meetings all year long, and provided the monthly announcements on our chapter voice mail. **Lisa Priester** and **Jennifer Wendell** planned our programs in April and May.

Andre Sharp kept up those plentiful job listings long after he planned to retire from his position as Employment Manager. **Fifi Sherman** has generously stepped in to take over this most valuable service.

Internet Manager **Tom Magnus** maintained our Web site (with assistance from **Carol Chung**) and sent out hundreds of job listings on our listserv. **Tom Wilson** managed our programs survey and published information about all kinds of resources on the Skillbuilder section of our website.

Steve Zirl served as Mentor Program Manager, matching up less experienced members with seasoned professionals to guide them.

In addition to copyediting *The Technograph*, **Esther Spachner** successfully nominated **Shirley Thomas** for Associate Fellow, assisted Pam with public relations, and was always available to lend a hand. Many other chapter members made their talents available to us, including **Major Johnson**, **Jack Molisani**, **Raymond Urgo**, and **Morty Redner**.

To all of our officers, council members, and volunteers, a huge THANK YOU for being part of our success! Your hard work and support have made it all possible. For those of you who have not gotten involved, now is the time. Come to our volunteer party on June 19. See the Calendar of Events for more information. **Ω**

Election (continued from page 1)

benefit from having a cost analysis of events, functions, and investment opportunities and having those findings presented to the STC council and membership at large.

Betsy Suttle, VP Programs, ran for the position because she wanted to be an important part of STC monthly meetings, which give members "the opportunity to get together, network, and learn new things. I'd like to be a part of that and making that successful." Part of that success will be measured by meeting members' requests and needs in the form of program content. Suttle is eager to hear from the membership regarding suggestions for programs, "I'd love to get suggestions. And if you've heard of a speaker or know of someone who would have something to offer the group, let me know. I'm really open to new ideas and different topics for the meetings." Suttle can be reached via e-mail at Bsuttle615@aol.com. Suttle plans to advertise the programs through *The Technograph*, the STC Web site, and possibly, phone calls and press releases. In an effort to boost membership and vary the program topics, Suttle is considering combining meetings with other professional groups like ASTD or The Business Writing Group by having topics that would be of interest to both memberships.

Esther Spachner is excited about her new position as VP Membership, and she has many ideas on how to expand our membership. She will work closely with other council members to strategize the many possibilities. For instance, "We need to invite more guests to meetings and then get them to join. Or maybe offer incentives to join." There's an untapped market of new technical writers that Spachner is interested in reaching out to: students. "We need to get more technical writing students involved. Contacting the schools and have the teachers promote attending STC meetings. Maybe even have a student coordinator," said Spachner. Spachner mentioned obtaining the names of key people and sending them an issue or two of *The Technograph* to help them gain interest in our organization.

Karen Blair's primary role as secretary will be to attend council meetings and take the notes for the meetings and publish those notes in a timely manner. But Blair realizes it's more than that. Blair took the position as secretary in an effort to give back to the organization she feels has helped her. Blair found her current position with Epson America through an STC meeting she attended last year. She expressed excitement about her new council position, "It's a good opportunity to learn more about the industry and to meet people in the industry and expand my horizons." Blair is also excited about spreading the news about STC, "I always refer people to STC when they ask about technical writing." Blair is a walking testimonial to the wonderful things that STC is capable of and a shining example of why it's important to give back when you receive. **Ω**

Vivian Ware is a documentation and training specialist at Romac International. She is now on assignment writing on-line documentation and training guidelines for a major motion picture studio.

Calendar of Events

- "Marketing Yourself as a Consultant," sponsored by the San Gabriel Valley STC Consulting SIG, Wednesday, **June 16**, 6:30 PM to 8 PM at the San Rafael Public Library, 1240 Nithsdale Rd, Pasadena. Park in the small library parking lot or on the street. RSVP/questions, please e-mail Patti Sweetman at psweetman@earthlink.net or page her at (909) 482-2504.
- LASTC annual volunteer party Saturday, **June 19**, at 7 PM in West LA. Call incoming president Jack Molisani to RSVP and to obtain directions, (323) 874-1435.
- KCET pledge drive, Saturday, **June 26**, from 5 to 11 PM. Dinner, snacks, and other munchies provided free of charge. Contact Amy Dolcourt at Amy_Dolcourt@XonTech.com or (310) 737-1795 to volunteer.

UCLA Courses

- "Technical Writing (Online)." Fee: \$550. Credit: 4 units, Management Reg. #B7694B **July 5-Aug. 30**. Instructor: Sara Stohl, M.A., senior technical writer, Parsons Corp. Reg. #B7770B July 15-Sept. 9. Instructor: Patricia Kalman, M.A., technical writer.
- "Technical Editing (Online)." Reg. #7720B **July 14-Sept. 15**. Credit: 4 units, Management Fee: \$550 Instructor: TBA.
- "Creating Readable Documents (Online)." NEW COURSE Reg. #B7781B **July 15-Sept. 9**. Fee: \$550. Credit: 4 units, Management Instructor: Adrienne Escoe, Ph.D., president/consultant, Escoe/Bliss Communication, and author, Nimble Documentation.
- "Information Design (Online)." Reg. #B7715B **June 29-Aug. 4**. Fee: \$550. Credit: 4 units, Management Instructor: Sara Stohl (for credits, see above).

For more information, call UCLA Extension's Department of Business and Management at (310) 825-4192. To enroll, (310) 825-9971 or (818) 784-7006. For a free UCLA Extension catalog, 1-800-554-UCLA. Complete course details can be found on UCLA Extension's Web site: <http://www.unex.ucla.edu>.

Upcoming Conferences

- The IEEE Professional Communication Society presents International Professional Communication Conference 1999 at the Omni Royal Orleans, New Orleans, **September 7-10**.
- The Phoenix chapter is hosting the STC Region 5 Conference **October 14-16** at the Grace Inn in Ahwatukee, Arizona (near Tempe). Contact Sandy Harnagel at sandyh@worldnet.att.net or visit the chapter web site (www.stc-phoenix.com) for more information.
- 1999 Region 8 Conference, Driving Forces in Technical Communication, **November 11-14** at the Long Beach Hilton Hotel. Hosted by LASTC. Currently seeking volunteers for industry liaison, exhibit hall coordinator, and audiovisual coordinator. Please contact Christine Stevens, conference chair, at

It's a party!

The 1999-2000 LASTC council invites you to a volunteer party. Make the most of your STC membership by getting more involved with the Los Angeles chapter.

Now's your chance to learn more about exciting opportunities. Learn new skills, meet people in your field—join the LASTC council!

June 19 at 7 PM

Call Jack Molisani to RSVP

(323) 874-1435

Refreshments will be served

Eight is Enough

(but more would be nice)

LASTC is looking for eight volunteers to staff the phones during KCET's pledge drive Saturday, June 26, from 5-11 PM. Dinner, snacks, and other munchies provided free of charge.

To reserve your space, contact LASTC Community Service Manager Amy Dolcourt at Amy_Dolcourt@XonTech.com or (310) 737-1795.

Society for Technical Communication
Los Angeles Chapter
P.O. Box 91400
Los Angeles, CA 90009

Address Correction Requested

SPEAK OUT!

COMPLETE THE NEWSLETTER QUESTIONNAIRE INSERTED IN THIS ISSUE OF *THE TECHNOGRAPH*.