

*The Technograph*

Newsletter of the  
Los Angeles Chapter  
of the Society for  
Technical Communication

November 1999

*"The mission of the Society for  
Technical Communication is to  
improve the quality and effectiveness  
of technical communication for  
audiences worldwide."*

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**STC Web site:**  
[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org) and [www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org)

**LASTC Web site:**  
[www.stc.org/region8/lac/www/lahome.htm](http://www.stc.org/region8/lac/www/lahome.htm)

**Region 8 Conference Web site:**  
[www.stc.org/region8/lac/www/confer\\_8.htm](http://www.stc.org/region8/lac/www/confer_8.htm)

# The Technograph

REGION 8 CONFERENCE, NOV. 11-14

## We've Got Some Very Good Reasons That You Should Go

*by Christine Stevens*

By now, you should have received the preliminary program for the upcoming Region 8 conference, "Driving Forces in Technical Communication," which is being sponsored by the Los Angeles chapter and is being held Nov. 11-14 at the Long Beach Hilton Hotel.

Why should you go? The conference is being held locally, is reasonably priced (\$200 for STC members for the entire conference), and is a great place to network. Not enough? Here are some other great reasons for you to attend.

**Informative conference sessions:** We've designed a very rich program for this year's conference, with a total of six preconference workshops and 47 sessions from which to choose.

We're also offering in-depth, hands-on preconference workshop versions of several of our finest sessions. This gives you the flexibility to choose the breadth of learning that fits your needs best, whether it's a conceptual overview or a concentrated dose of real-world practical skill development.

**Cool keynote speech:** In a rare West Coast appearance, Mary Wise, STC president, will present the keynote address. Wise is senior manager of education services at Manugistics, Inc. and has more than 20 years of experience in technical communication, including stints as a word processor, technical writer, instructional designer,

and manager. Wise's background as a circus clown prepared her well for both her corporate and STC jobs.

**Exhibit hall:** Learn about the latest tools and technology available for our profession.

Our exhibitors include:

- UCLA Extension
- Technical Standards
- Chrystal Software
- Clarity Technical
- Blue Sky
- Information Mapping

Additionally, the exhibit hall features:

- Winning entries of STC's international technical communication competitions
- Résumé/portfolio review booth
- Food service
- Information booth staffed by volunteers who can answer your questions about the 2000 Region 8 Conference, to be held in Hawaii

**Résumé/portfolio review service:** In addition to dozens of informative sessions, this year's conference offers a résumé/portfolio review service, located in the exhibit hall and coordinated by Jim Desmond of Technical Standards. If you're working on your résumé and have decided you need professional

*See Region 8 Conference on page 6*

## The Technograph

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

# I'm Not 'Just' a Technical Writer

I recently told a friend that I had a Web site. "You can do that stuff," he said, half question, half statement. "Yes," I replied. "But I thought you were just a technical writer?" he unwisely continued.

"Do you know what a Web site is?" I asked rhetorically. "It's information important to an audience presented so that it delivers the right info at the right time, and looks good doing it."

"And do you know what?" I asked again rhetorically. "That's what I've been doing every day for 15 years or so." I think I was getting loud about now.

"Why is everyone so surprised that a technical writer can create a Web site?" I paused and looked around the room at the people who through no fault of their own had become my audience.

"Because the Web is full of tacky colors and flashing advertisements?" I went on. "And all I as a technical writer usually produce is black-and-white pages?"

"Does no one understand that the underlying principles are the same?" I shouted. My friend had slunk away, and everyone else was avoiding eye contact with me.

"And let me tell you a few things about this 'why-two-kay' thing..." is the last thing I remember saying. I made no new friends at the party that night.

\* \* \* \* \*

I didn't get very many responses to my request for Web sites of use to technical communicators in the September *Technograph*, so I'm going to start the ball rolling (again) with a few more of my own.

My newest favorite is NetLingo (<http://www.netlingo.com/>), which lets you get definitions of those pesky

new Internet terms that pop up so quickly.

Another place to get information about a technical topic is WebReference (<http://www.webreference.com/>). But instead of getting back a single definition, WebReference gives you links to articles and resources about your topic.

WebReference is much more comprehensive than NetLingo.

Another online resource that lets you get information about technical subjects is CyberAtlas (<http://cyber-atlas.internet.com/>). It also pulls up lots of resources for a given topic.

Since I'm on the subject of finding information on the Internet, I think I'll stick with it.

I also like NetDictionary (<http://www.netdictionary.com/>) because it's like a huge glossary or Internet-related terms.

In fact, a lot of the terms that I have become familiar with in the Internet-related software business appear in NetDictionary.

OneLook ([http://www.onelook.com](http://www.onelook.com/)) takes the term you give and looks it up in a whole bunch of dictionaries, including specialized ones, and then tells you which dictionaries it found your term in and provides you a link to that term.

At the time of this writing, OneLook was claiming that its database had 2,910,725 words in 583 dictionaries indexed. Naturally I can't verify this, but I can report that when I've done a search with OneLook, I have received lots of hits in a short time. I don't know about you, but that's what I want from a search engine.

Email me with your favorite technical communication-oriented Web site at [sjwilson99@earthlink.net](mailto:sjwilson99@earthlink.net).

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Planning Your Future, Making it Happen

In last month's column I mentioned that you can find everything you need in the STC to make your career goals become a reality. Skills and experience will land you a great job, but it takes knowledge and practice to gain them. So let's look at the first step: getting the knowledge you need to move your career forward.

In addition to our developing LA Seminar Series, the 1999 Region 8 conference offers an incredible learning opportunity. Whether you are new to technical communication or a seasoned pro, there are sessions that will appeal to you.

Also, you can learn just about anything having to do with technical communication at the conference, it is networking heaven for contractors and employees alike. The "hidden job

market" is found in networking with your peers, not browsing the classifieds or the Web.

Plus it gives us a chance to meet other STC members and to have some fun in the process!

Having the Region 8 conference hosted by our own chapter and "in our own backyard" makes the conference an incredible value—how else could you attend a three-day conference for less than \$300?

See you there!

*I am always happy to hear from my readers. Feel free to contact me at [jm@claritytechnical.com](mailto:jm@claritytechnical.com) or via my Web site [www.claritytechnical.com](http://www.claritytechnical.com) with your thoughts, questions, or offers to volunteer!*

## REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SERVICE MANAGER

# The Holidays Are Upon Us

Happy holidays to you! All of them: Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Yalda, Kwanzaa, New Year's, and so on. For those of you with empty places at your holiday table, "orphan" senior citizens will gladly help fill those seats and contribute holiday cheer.

Clothing and toy donations for low-income families will be accepted at the October and December chapter meetings.

Foshay Learning Center in downtown Los Angeles is looking for mentors-by-email for 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students on the subjects of technical writing, desktop publishing, Web design, Office suite products, programming, image editing, multimedia authoring, advanced illustration software, and 3D animation. The program begins in January.

On Saturday, Dec. 4, we will be helping KCET answer its pledge drive phones at its Los Angeles studio, from 5:30 to 11 p.m. Dinner and an STC tee-shirt (if you don't already have one) will be provided.

Contact Amy Dolcourt at (310) 737-1705 or [amy\\_dolcourt@xontech.com](mailto:amy_dolcourt@xontech.com) to volunteer.

# Events and Information

Visit the Technical Book  
Company  
2056 Westwood Blvd.  
LA 90025  
(800) 233-5150

View the Tech Standards  
Web site at  
[www.tecstandards.com](http://www.tecstandards.com)  
(800) 889-7116

## General

- The Orange County chapter is featuring a talk by Robert Horn at its November meeting. Horn is the CEO and co-founder of Information Mapping and author of a new book about visual language for the 21st century. The meeting is Wednesday, Nov. 10 starting at 6:30 p.m.; \$25 per person, \$50 for walk-ins; includes a buffet. Space is limited, so reservations are suggested.
- The **1999 Technical Communicator Salary Survey** is available online at [http://www.stc-va.org/PDF\\_Files/99salary.pdf](http://www.stc-va.org/PDF_Files/99salary.pdf). It came with the September/October issue of *Intercom*, but it's online also.
- For those of you looking for a job in technical communication or if you are trying to fill a job, you might want to consider the **STC Jobs Database** at <http://www.stc-va.org/jobstart.html>. To look for a job, you search the database by location, salary range, and permanent/contract positions. To post an opening, you just fill out the online form. It could hardly be easier.

## Conferences

- **Help '99** is being held Nov. 1 through 4, 1999 at the Hyatt Regency in Dallas, Texas. Get more information at <http://www.helpuniversity.com/conferen/fall99.htm>.
- The **STC's 47th Annual Conference will be held in Orlando, Florida May 21 through 24, 2000**. Put it down on your calendar now, and starting checking the Web site for information (<http://www.stc.org/47th/>). You can download a PDF file of the call for proposals at [http://www.stc-va.org/PDF\\_Files/Call20.pdf](http://www.stc-va.org/PDF_Files/Call20.pdf).
- You can view and download the proceedings from the Region 6 Conference that was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on Oct. 4 and 5, 1999 at <http://www.stc.org/region6/proceed.htm>.

## Special Interest Groups

- The Fall 1999 issue of the Management SIG newsletter, *Management*, is available online at <http://www.stc.org/pics/mgmt/news/Q399NEWS.PDF>.

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## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

# Welcome New Members!

We want to give Mildred Williams a warm welcome to the LASTC. She attended the September meeting and joined that very evening.

We like to see that kind of enthusiasm in our chapter members. Welcome aboard, Mildred!

Other recent new members include Linda Magee, Jennifer Brawer, Stan Cheren, and Harry Manos.

These last four joined the old-fashioned way, by sending their paperwork to the national office, but we want you to know that you are no less welcome than Mildred.

To all of our new members, welcome! We hope to see you at chapter meetings and we encourage you to take advantage of your LASTC membership, including volunteering.

## First LASTC Chapter Meeting a Huge Success

Microsoft's Kate Harper kicked off the first LASTC chapter meeting of the 1999/2000 year with an informative, thought-provoking, and humorous presentation about how we as technical communicators will use our skills in the future to write for an audience raised with technology—the so-called “Net Generation.”

A packed conference room was on hand at the Wyndham Gardens Hotel in Culver City as Harper gave a quick

demonstration of one of the projects she's currently directing, Microsoft Home Publishing, showing how the latest user interface technologies and online help are carefully integrated to server the needs of the target audience.

As usual, the main presentation was preceded by networking and a scrumptious dinner, not to mention an enjoyable “business” meeting hosted by chapter President Jack Molisani. Molisani presided over short presenta-

tions about membership, the upcoming Region 8 conference, and the LA Seminar Series. My only complaint with the evening is that I didn't win the raffle—again!

It was an enjoyable and informative evening. If you were unable to attend, we're sorry, and we hope to see you next time. Mark your calendars now for the Region 8 conference Nov. 11 through 14 and the festive December chapter meeting, Tuesday, Dec. 14.



*LASTC President Jack Molisani, above left, and other guests at the September 1999 chapter meeting listen to the speaker, Microsoft's Kate Harper, right.*

### DIRECTOR-SPONSOR REPORT

## Hurricane Floyd Can't Stop STC Board Meeting

*By Kathleen B. Aughey*

Neither rain, nor snow, nor dark of night...but Floyd, that's another story! Thanks to hurricane Floyd, STC had its first “virtual board meeting” this fall. We may not have executed business in the environment we had planned—we were supposed to meet on the South Carolina coast on the same day that Floyd came through—but we still were able to conduct business successfully through a telephone conference.

The following paragraphs describe some of the decisions made at the board meeting:

- The FY2000 budget was approved. With expected income of \$4,574,500, our budgeted surplus for the year is \$12,019.
- The board approved a new dues structure, effective January 1, 2000. Regular member dues will be \$110. Student member dues will be \$45.
- Five merit grant or loan applications

were approved:

The Atlanta chapter's \$3,000 grant will help establish its scholarship program.

The Chicago chapter's \$1,000 loan will support a series of technical training programs, and its \$2,000 grant will be used to start a public relations program.

The Wisconsin chapter's \$3,000 grant will be used to develop and

*See Director-Sponsor Report on page 7*

# Getting the Most from the Region 8 Conference

by Karen Bergen

What can you expect when you attend the Region 8 Conference? If you've seen the preliminary program and the wealth of educational sessions available, you should have no problem persuading your boss to pay the \$200 registration fee (\$250 if you didn't register in advance).

What's in it for me?

It could be a raise, based on your increased knowledge of online help design, XML, or editing techniques. Or maybe you'll be ready for a promotion after you've absorbed all the presentations on project management and marketing your skills.

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"If you take advantage of the resume and portfolio review service plus the sessions devoted to job search and career strategies, your dream job may be closer than you think."

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If you take advantage of the resume and portfolio review service plus the sessions devoted to job search and career strategies, your dream job may be closer than you think.

Which sessions should I attend?

Don't miss the keynote address by International STC President Mary Wise. I guarantee you'll be enlightened and entertained by the top leader of our organization.

You'll have to plan carefully to choose from 46 sessions crammed into seven

time slots. Make sure you come up with alternatives, because some sessions fill up, and there are always a few last-minute changes in schedule.

When am I going to have fun?

Sign up for the dinner-dance on Friday night or the networking lunch on Saturday. Many people who attend conferences get as much out of the informal networking as they do out of the technical sessions—not to mention great food and entertainment.

Take one of the hospitality tours. The conference planners have built free time into the schedule, so you can see the Queen Mary, the Aquarium, or other Long Beach highlights without missing any conference sessions.

What exhibits will I see?

The exhibits showcase some of the leading vendors in technical communication—companies that provide tools for writing and publishing, training for

communicators, and employment services. If you're looking for resources, clients, or a job, this is the place for you.

View the winning entries in last year's international technical publications and art competitions. Feast your eyes on the best examples in our field and see how your own work measures up.

What should I wear?

Most attendees choose business attire or business casual rather than jeans. Bring a jacket or sweater—you never know about the temperature in those hotel meeting rooms. And by all means, wear comfortable shoes. You'll be doing plenty of walking between sessions. Don't worry about bringing a notebook or totebag—these are some of the fringe benefits you'll get from the conference.

*Karen Bergen is immediate past president and Historian of the LASTC. She has been to lots of conferences.*

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## Region 8 Conference

*continued from page 1*

help, this is the answer. Appointments are taken on a first-come, first-served basis, so indicate your preferred time and date on the registration form.

**Rideshare program:** Take advantage of our carpool coordination service. Call Esther Spachner at (310) 207-6902 and tell her your location, whether you prefer to drive or ride, and how many passengers you can accommodate. You and your carmates decide on a pickup time and place and who controls the air conditioning.

**Lively social program:** Tour one of three local attractions: the Queen

Mary, Aquarium of the Pacific, or Rancho Los Alamitos. Dance the night away at the Friday night dinner-dance, which features a full dinner, dancing, and door prizes.

The Saturday networking lunch provides the perfect venue to network and hear first-hand how your peers are handling the same professional challenges. You might even win a raffle prize!

See you in November!

*Christine Stevens is a technical editor at Hughes Space and Communications in El Segundo. She is also the 1999 STC Region 8 Conference chairperson.*

# Selling Your Boss on Going to the Conference or How Do You Go Without Paying for it Yourself

So you're convinced that the Region 8 Conference will help you at work, but how do you sell the idea to your pointy-haired, tight-fisted boss?

Try writing a letter that explains the many benefits of attending professional conferences. Feel free to use the following model:

Dear —:

To help provide [your company] with the most current professional methods and technological advances in editing/writing and report/publication management, I would like to attend the Society for Technical Communication Region 8 Conference in Long Beach, Nov. 11–14.

The conference offers dozens of sessions with topics covering all aspects of technical writing, editing, project management, and publication production. Six or seven sessions are offered during each time slot, including these, which may be of interest to our company:

[List relevant sessions]

Although I will try to attend these particular sessions, some of the most popular may be closed because of limited capacity. In that case, I will choose alternatives. Even if I cannot attend some of the sessions, the full papers will be included in the proceedings, which are distributed at conference check-in.

The costs of attending the conference would likely be [list registration fees, transportation costs, cost of meals, hotel charge—all listed in the preliminary program and the official conference Web site at <http://stc.org/region8/conferences/www/index.html>].

Summary of benefits for [company]:

The sessions will provide me with more background knowledge of report production, editing, writing, management concepts, and government contracting.

This knowledge will enable me to handle my current projects with more

professionalism and confidence, which will reflect favorably on our company.

I will be able to pass on much of this information to coworkers, and my notes and copy of the proceedings will be available for reference.

Sincerely,

[your name here]

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## Director-Sponsor Report

*continued from page 5*

expand its mentoring program.

The Aloha and Los Angeles chapters' \$6,000 loan will be used for the joint Region 7/Region 8 Pan-Pacific Conference to be held in Oct. 2000.

- The External Relations Committee presented a two-year plan that will develop and roll out the STC brand. The first step in this plan will be to publish the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Brand Development, which was reviewed and approved by the board. Look for the RFP on [www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org).
- The guideline for the Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals was approved. Under this new program, which is similar to the existing Faculty Internship Grant Program, the Society may award stipends to enable practicing professionals in the field of technical communication to serve as adjunct or visiting faculty in colleges and universities. For more information, visit [www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org).
- Starting in the year 2000–2001, an online category will be added to the existing hard-copy category for the International Student Technical

Writing Competition.

- The board approved many committee management appointments. Among these appointments are the managers of the External Relations committees:

Donna Sakson (Puget Sound),  
Corporate Identity;

**Amy Dolcourt (Los Angeles),  
Community Outreach**

Jeff Staples (Houston), Public  
Relations Resources Network

Deborah Silvi (Houston), Corporate  
Support

Katherine Staples (Austin), 50th  
Anniversary

Dave Garrett (Rocky Mountain),  
Special Project—Promotional Booth

Mollye Barrett (Wisconsin), Special  
Project—Technical Communications  
Celebrations

Lottie Applewhite (North Carolina),  
Special Project—Journal Editor's  
Fellowship

- The board approved the appointment of Charles Fisher (Washington, DC) as Technical Program Manager for the 49th Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

# Getting to the Region 8 Conference in Long Beach

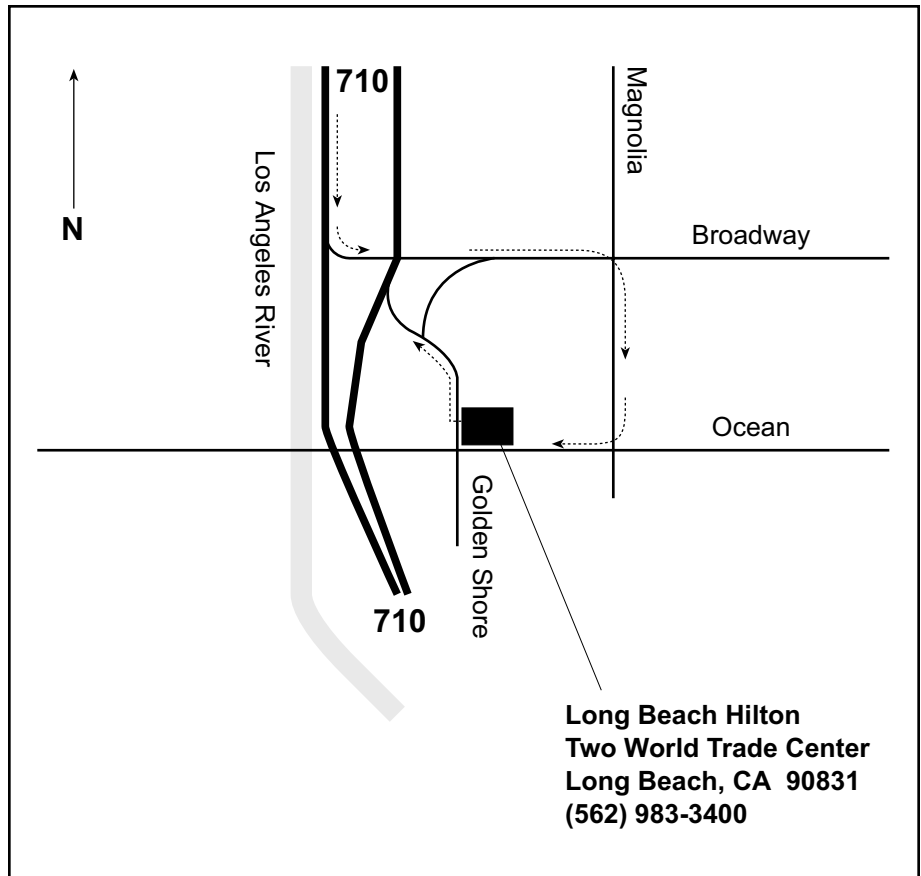
We all know how difficult it can be getting into and out of the venues where these conferences are held, especially when you've never been there before.

To assist with this problem, here are directions to the Long Beach Hilton:

Get to the Southbound 710 freeway; when it splits, head for Downtown Long Beach (the other split goes to the Queen Mary); exit onto Broadway (Eastbound) from the left lane; turn right onto Magnolia (Southbound); turn right onto Ocean (Westbound); hotel is two blocks ahead, on the right; self parking is off of Golden Shore.

When you're leaving, head North on Golden Shore; the Northbound 710 starts almost immediately. You can head North or South on the 405 from the Northbound 710.

If you need to go there, the Web address of the Long Beach Hilton is:  
[www.hilton.com/hotels/LGBLHHH/](http://www.hilton.com/hotels/LGBLHHH/).



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Address Correction Requested