Students Meet Members For Lunch

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How does a student go about meeting people at ASA meetings? If you are a member who first attended ASA meetings as a student, how did you meet people? You probably wanted to meet members working on problems similar to yours, particularly people whose *JASA* articles you had read. How does a first-time attendee, especially a student, go about encountering the people of interest in this big crowd of strangers? It can be intimidating.

Seeking to make it easier for students to get to know ASA members, the Committee on Education in Acoustics started the "Students Meet Members for Lunch" program in the mid-1990s. This is not a mixer program, where a bunch of students and a bunch of members get together for an organized midday meal. Instead, the program arranges separate one-on-one encounters so that the student has the member's full attention during the entire meal. The idea is for the student and member to get to know each other; otherwise, no particular format is prescribed. For the student to feel on equal footing with the member, the meal is Dutch (the member is not expected to pick up the tab). Fredericka Bell-Berti, then Chair of the Education Committee, first coordinated the program, then then Scott Sommerfeldt in 1997, and, finally, the author in 2002.

Implementing the program was difficult at first. Attempts to arrange student-member pairings at the ASA meeting itself proved unworkable at a time when email was still somewhat primitive and smart phones essentially unknown. Eventually, making arrangements by email well ahead of the meeting proved to be the solution. The *Call for Papers* includes an announcement of the program:

> "The ASA Education Committee arranges one-on-one lunch meetings between students and ASA members. The purpose is to make it easier for students to meet and interact with members at Acoustical Society meetings. Each lunch pairing is arranged separately. Students who are interested should contact Dr. David Blackstock, University of Texas at Austin, by email: dtb@austin.utexas.edu. Please provide your name, university, department, degree you are seeking …, research field, acoustical interests, your supervisor's name, …. Each participant pays for his/her own meal."

Figure 1. *Pamela Harght (Berklee College of Music) and Ewe Hansen (Indiana State University) having a lunchtime discussion about musical instrument normal modes at the 2004 ASA meeting in San Diego, CA.*

How many students have taken advantage of the program? From the 2003 Nashville meeting through the 2014 Indianapolis meeting (not counting the Paris and Hong Kong meetings, where the program did not operate), an average of 12.7 students asked to participate. The 2010 Baltimore meeting holds the record for largest participation; 28 lunches were arranged. The lowest number was six at Nashville (2003). A major problem is that the program is not well known. Despite the *Call for Papers* notice (which also appears elsewhere) and strong support by the Student Council, comments like "Sounds like a good program, but I've never heard of it" and "I know I'm past the deadline, but I just found out about the program" are frequent.

Reaction to the program by participants, both students and members, is almost always positive, frequently highly enthusiastic. The coordinator usually asks for feedback after each ASA meeting. Here are excerpts from some of the student answers to a question posed.

Was the lunch meeting interesting and useful to you?

- Absolutely! Very interesting! It was an honor to meet the person who is considered to be the "father" of the research field I am in. But also interesting in many other ways. I am very grateful that you contacted Dr. _____ and that he agreed to meet up. I am still amazed that ASA could make this happen.

- The lunch meeting was awesome! He told me about his work...and was even interested in what I was currently doing. ... [as] a first-time ASA [attendee], meeting with Dr. _____ one-on-one was really valuable.
- Yes, it was one of [the most] memorable/valuable time[s] for me during the conference.... [She was] a big guy in my area of speech communication. [Such a thing] is sometimes hard/rare for me (students).

Members are glad to participate; most offer to do so again. Here are some sample comments.

- The meeting was a bit awkward at first, but we had a good lunch in which I got some notion of what the student was interested in.... [It] bore fruit later as I was able to introduce the student to people he expressed an interest in meeting or I thought he might enjoy meeting. At a subsequent conference, I was also an alternative person for him to come up and talk to. I should add that the first student I met at these lunches some years ago still comes to me occasionally to keep in touch and to ask for career advice.
- I definitely think the lunch meeting was useful for the student. I was able to describe various ASA activities. The student had no intention of attending TC meetings, but after our discussion, he attended [Physical Acoustics] on Tuesday and Noise on Thursday.
- I believe the meeting was useful and interesting for [her].... We had a lot of overlap in our interests and I believe I was able to give her advice and a perspective that she hasn't gotten from her other mentors.... It is a great way to really spend some time getting to know one of the student members.

In summary, Students Meet Members for Lunch has proved to be a successful although not a widely enough known procedure for students to connect and interact with ASA members.

News from the Acoustical Society Foundation

Mission of the Acoustical Society Foundation Board:
To support the mission of the ASA by developing financial resources for strategic initiatives and special purposes.

One of the most prestigious awards from the ASA is the Rossing Prize in Acoustics Education. The prize was established in 2003 from a generous gift to the Acoustical Society Foundation Fund by Thomas D. Rossing to recognize an individual who has made significant contributions toward furthering acoustics education through distinguished teaching, creation of educational materials, textbook writing, and other activities. It represents a convergence of four overlapping facets of the Society. First, the prize recognizes the valuable contributions of outstanding teachers across the spectrum of acoustics knowledge and research. Surely, each one of us owes a profound debt to the dedicated mentors who have aided and guided our work. The 11 recipients of this award to date come from a wide range of technical areas, but all have shown by example and tutelage the benefits of helping and mentoring new talent in our fields. Second, the award reflects the profound generosity and leadership of one of ASA's most revered members, Professor Thomas Rossing, who himself is an exemplary teacher, author, and educator. Third, the recipient of the prize presents a formal lecture, the "Acoustics Education Prize Lecture," in a session sponsored by the Committee on Education in Acoustics at the ASA meeting at which the prize is acknowledged. This ensures the opportunity for all members of the Society to glean insight into the talents and expertise of the prize winner. And fourth, the prize represents the support and goals of the Acoustical Society Foundation to provide a vehicle and endowment to fulfill our mission and to perpetuate the goals of our Society. The prize consists of a medal, a certificate, a $4,000 stipend, and reimbursement of travel expenses to attend the ASA meeting where the medal and certificate are to be presented.

Two years ago, the Rossing Prize winner was Juliette Loup of the Department of Physics at the University of New Orleans; her Acoustics Education Prize Lecture was entitled *Time-Frequency Analysis for Acoustics Education and the Listening to Whales in the Gulf of Mexico*. And just last year, the prize went to Uwe Hansen of the Chemistry and Physics Department at Indiana State University; he spoke about *Educating Mechanical Engineers in the Art of Noise Control*. Stay tuned: we will meet this year's winner at the fall ASA meeting in Jacksonville, FL.