



A Year in the Life as ASA President

Summer seems to have arrived, finally, in Ottawa. I still have three weeks and the upcoming Acoustical Society of America (ASA)/European Acoustics Association (EAA) meeting in Boston remaining in my term. It is a calm, sunny morning as I begin to write this editorial, a sharp contrast to the whirlwind of activities that I expect to face at the upcoming ASA/EAA meeting. In a way, this typifies my year as ASA President: periods of intense activity interspersed with periods of relaxed chores.

Acoustics Today Editor Arthur Popper suggested that a topic of interest might be a discussion about my year as president. This sounded like a fun concept to me, so I am giving it a try. A lot could happen in the meantime, some maybe good, some maybe not so good, so a bit of extrapolation is necessary. When this editorial appears later this fall, it will be interesting to see if I assumed correctly.

When I began my term, I anticipated that there would be some big jobs, a lot of little tasks, a few tough decisions, and a few difficult situations throughout the year along with strong support from ASA headquarters and the volunteers throughout the ASA. I was right on all counts.

The biggest of the big jobs is chairing the Executive Council (EC) at the biannual meetings of the ASA. There are two nearly all-day meetings of the EC: one to start the ASA meeting, the other to conclude it. It is here that the affairs of the Society are managed. I found that a couple of weeks of effort are necessary to get prepared for the EC meetings and a couple of weeks afterward to deal with the actions arising from the decisions made.

The president also sits on several committees (Technical Council, Investments, and the College of Fellows) and attends the Administrative Council meetings at which representatives report on committee activities. In recent years, the president has also overseen the Strategic Plan “Champions Meeting” where the four Task Forces get together to review progress on the implementation of the strategic plan. In between all these meetings, there are informal and impromptu discussions with various groups of people. So, busy, busy! I

can count on one hand the number of technical papers that I have heard at recent ASA meetings.

The president also has social responsibilities at ASA meetings. The Plenary Session gives us a chance to recognize the outstanding contributions of our members. I look forward to these occasions. I am, though, still trying to figure out how to shake hands, smile, and look natural for the photographs. At the June ASA/EAA meeting in Boston, there is also an Opening Ceremony and a Closing Ceremony. Actually, the previous joint ASA/Acoustics Society of Japan (ASJ) meeting in Honolulu had a similar lineup of social events. (On thinking about this, it occurs to me that I am the only ASA President who will have had two joint international ASA meetings during his/her tenure.) The president hosts an evening reception (usually Wednesday evening) to which chairs of committees, associate editors, and special guests are invited. Regrettably, although this gathering is always friendly and interesting, it usually conflicts with the ASA Jam Session that I love to attend.

In between ASA meetings, the officers and managers of the Society get together to review progress on various initiatives. This gathering, known (surprisingly) as the Officers & Managers (O&M) meeting, also consumes time in preparation and fall out.

In between ASA and O&M meetings, the work load does taper off. This brings me to the “little tasks.” There is something nearly every day. I wake up each morning wondering “what will Elaine Moran (our director of operations) send me today?” Sometimes it is to review and approve an email broadcast to be sent out to members; often it is a reminder of a chore I have forgotten. The president cosigns, with the executive director, all contracts for \$50K or more. This brings me into negotiations with meeting hotels, for example. I have put considerable effort into updating the ASA rules to accommodate the many changes over the last couple of years, particularly the creation of two new Administrative Councils to which committees dealing with publications, standards, and finance will report. There are ASA certificates that need to be signed, such as those for new Fellows of the Society. There are reports to be read, questions to be fielded, and decisions on meeting details to be okayed. And there are *Acoustics Today* editorials to write; this is my second such article.

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From the President

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The most time-consuming little tasks are probably the appointments. There are many standing and ad hoc committees within the ASA. Each year, some of the members roll off their committees: every three years, the term of the committee chair expires, and there are unexpected resignations of both members and chairs. The task of finding appropriate replacements is a collaborative and time-consuming one.

There have been several difficult situations, and I have had to make a few tough decisions. There may be some people upset with me, but I have always tried to act with the best interests of the Society in mind. I hope my involvement has helped to smooth things over. Fortunately, the happy experiences as president far outweigh the not-so-happy experiences.

Serving the Society, whether as president or in any other capacity, can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. The ASA is fueled by many volunteers, and there is satisfaction working together with dedicated people on a common cause. I have always enjoyed helping keep the ASA, my professional home for nearly four decades, a flourishing, vibrant, and progressive Society. One of the special joys of being president is

being involved in honoring colleagues through the awarding of medals, prizes, and fellowships.

Serving as ASA President was a daunting challenge. But I was not unprepared. Like all presidents before me, I had years of apprenticeship on various committees, gaining the necessary familiarity with ASA structure, procedures, and people. Everyone's path is a bit different. In my case, I started as a member of several administrative and technical committees (TCs), and then served a term as the chair of the Noise TC. This was followed by election to a term on the Executive Council followed by a term as ASA vice president.

Throughout the preceding years and my term as president, I was privileged to work with many interesting and dedicated people, particularly Elaine Moran and Susan Fox at ASA headquarters. I sometimes got unnecessarily mired in details, and a quick chat with them brought the big picture back into focus. Serving as president has been an honor, a year of interesting challenges, and one of the highlights of my career. Was it worth it? Absolutely! Would I do it again? Hmm, perhaps once is enough.