

Administrative Committee Report: Committee on Meetings

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The Committee on Meetings is charged with proposing sites and dates for future meetings and meeting exhibits, subject to Executive Council approval; providing a forum for exchanging information on meeting arrangements among local meeting chairs; and proposing changes in the meeting format for consideration by the Executive Council.

For virtually its entire history, the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) has held spring and fall meetings each year, with the exception of the WWII years when only one meeting was held each year. The meetings are usually in cities where there is a local community of acousticians centered around a university, acoustics-oriented businesses, or activities such as music or health. Many ASA members share the opinion that the semiannual meetings are a part of the essential character of the Society, affording frequent opportunities to meet with colleagues and hear about recent advances in the field of acoustics and supporting a sense of community among acousticians.

The general purpose of the Committee on Meetings (COM) is to support the planning of future meetings of the Society. Of course, there are a variety of different facets associated with that general goal, and this article provides some insight into how meeting locations are selected, how general chairs and local committees are assembled, and how the Society supports the local committee and chairs in organizing the meeting. In addition to supporting the local chairs and committees, the COM serves as a forum to discuss a variety of topics concerning how the ASA organizes meetings, including where meetings are held, joint meetings with other societies, and international meetings. Some of those elements are also discussed in this article.

The regular (some would say inexorable) drumbeat of semiannual meetings means that a central focus of the COM is to identify suitable locations for future meetings and individuals who are willing to organize a local committee and serve as the local chair for a meeting. Decisions about future meeting sites must be made well in advance because in many cities that we may want to visit, there are only a few hotels that have sufficient facilities to host the meeting. Necessary facilities include not only enough sleeping rooms but also meeting rooms for up to 13 technical sessions running in parallel as well as the variety of administrative and technical committee meetings that occur during an ASA meeting. In considering a city as a potential meeting site, at least one suitable hotel must be identified, meeting dates when the hotel facilities and rooms are available must be identified, and guest room rates and other terms must be negotiated with the hotel before signing a contract. Although much of the hotel negotiation is handled by the ASA executive director and meeting planner, it is customary for the local chair to also be involved to provide a local perspective.

In general, we try to plan meetings three years or more in advance to make sure that a suitable hotel is available and that acceptable rates can be negotiated. We

currently have meetings booked through 2021 and are beginning to consider options for 2022 and later. In most cases, meeting locations are determined on the basis of a proposal from a local member who is interested in bringing one of our meetings to his/her city. The ASA website has information about how to propose a meeting, including what information should be included in a proposal to be brought to the COM. Anyone interested in proposing a meeting may find it helpful to attend a committee meeting where there will be an opportunity to meet with chairs of past and future meetings, ask questions, and gain a general sense of how meeting planning is done. The COM almost always meets on Tuesday at 1:30 pm during each regular ASA meeting. The location of the meeting is published in the meeting program, and we welcome guests interested in the ASA meeting planning process, especially those who may be interested in chairing a future meeting.

In addition to identifying future meeting sites and local chairs, the COM serves as a forum for chairs of recent past and upcoming meetings to report on their planning process and to raise questions about meeting planning, hotel arrangements, how the ASA Jam works, menus and venues for the Tuesday and Thursday socials, arranging technical tours, and a broad variety of other topics that arise in planning an ASA meeting. The chairs work together collegially to provide assistance and recommendations to one another, and it is an impressively supportive group.

In the recent past, the Society has moved to relieve the local chair and committee of some of the more burdensome aspects of meeting planning, making it a less time-consuming endeavor. Much of the credit for this is due to the addition of the ASA meeting planner, who brings a great deal of expertise in hotel negotiation, budget planning, and other aspects of meeting planning to assist the local committee. This allows the local committee to focus on injecting regional color into the planning process through the selection of sites for technical tours, menu planning, Society luncheon speaker selection, accompanying persons programs, and local student involvement.

The discussions during committee meetings are wide ranging around the general topic of meeting planning, identifying difficulties, and offering solutions to improve the process. A good recent example was the development of a virtual technical program organizing meeting (TPOM). Previously, after abstracts were submitted, the technical program chair and representatives from each technical committee would meet at the meeting hotel several months before the meet-

ing for two days to sort abstracts, arrange the technical program for the meeting, and assign rooms for each of the technical sessions. This generally involved a multiday trip for the technical program organizers to attend the TPOM. Thanks to suggestions made at the committee meeting and the hard work of a group of ASA members involved in organizing the technical program for the Pittsburgh meeting in spring 2015, a process for a virtual TPOM was worked out and demonstrated successfully. This has now become the standard method of organizing the technical program, and it has made a process that was somewhat inconvenient and time consuming much more efficient, eliminating the need for most TPOM participants to travel.

In recent years, various questions involving international meetings held overseas have been addressed in the COM as well as in various ad hoc committees. One of the issues has been the frequency with which the ASA holds joint meetings overseas with other societies. As the premier society in the field of acoustics, the ASA is often asked to join with another society to hold a joint meeting, and often we are asked to hold the joint meeting overseas. The most recent example is the joint meeting held in Hong Kong in 2012. That meeting was cosponsored by the ASA, the Acoustical Society of China (ASC), the Hong Kong Institute of Acoustics (HKIA), and the Western Pacific Acoustics Conference (WESPAC). Before that, the ASA held joint meetings in Paris (2008) and Berlin (1999), both cosponsored with the European Acoustical Association. The general sense of the Society about the frequency with which these overseas meetings are held has been evolving. Although meetings in Canada, Mexico, and Hawai'i are not uncommon, meetings in Europe and Asia had not occurred before the Berlin meeting. For many of our members, the opportunity to experience another culture and meet with colleagues for whom travel to the United States is difficult must be weighed against the additional cost and inconvenience of international travel to these meetings. In recent polls of the membership, in discussions in the COM, and in technical council meetings, it is apparent that a majority of the Society's membership favors more frequent international meetings, perhaps occurring as often as every three to four years, and the COM is responding to this preference.

We should note that over the past 20 years or so, some 30-40% of our regular semiannual meetings have been cosponsored with another society, although most have been held in North America. So, our Society's outreach internationally is already considerable. For many years, the Society has had a

pattern of joint meetings in Honolulu with the Acoustical Society of Japan on a 10-year recurring basis. We have in recent years established a similar rhythm with the Mexican and Iberoamerican societies, with the meetings held in Mexico thus far. Meetings with the Canadian society have been common for many years. With the European Acoustical Association, we are establishing a pattern of joint meetings at nine-year intervals, alternating between North American and European cities. There is an opportunity to establish a similar rhythm with the WESPAC societies, and we are at present finalizing plans for a joint meeting in 2021 with the Australian Acoustical Society (AAS) and WESPAC to be held in Sydney.

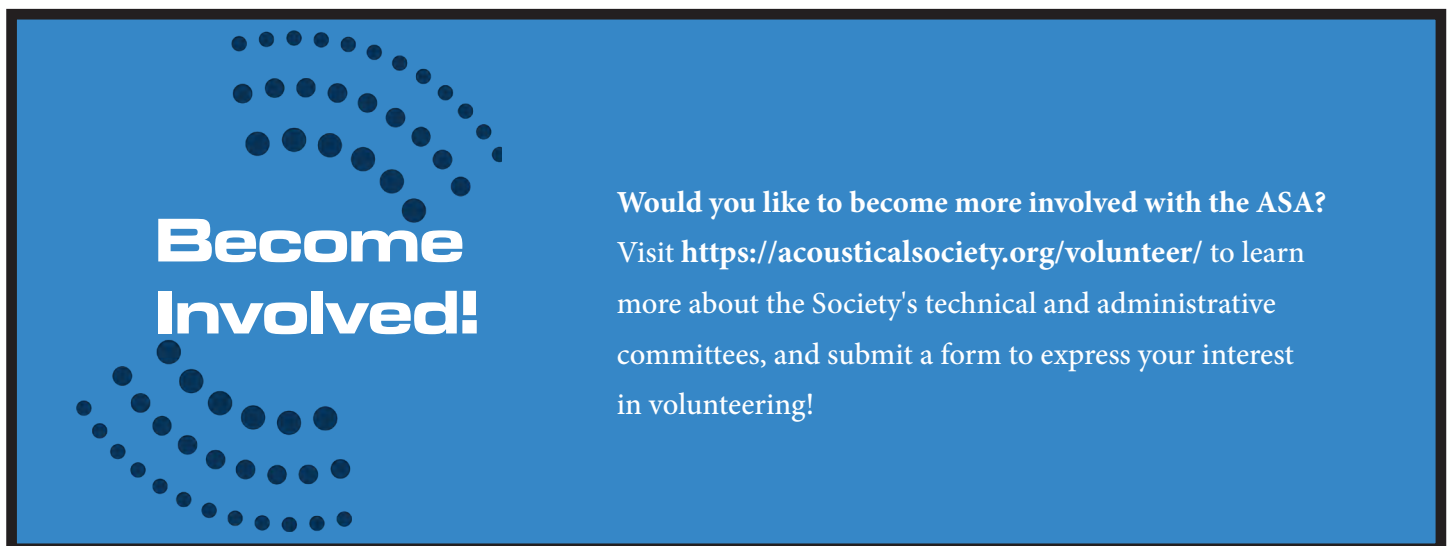
These types of international joint meetings cosponsored by the ASA and other large acoustical societies necessarily are more complex than a regular semiannual meeting held in North America. To enable us to organize and conduct these meetings efficiently and cost effectively, there is quite a bit of work to do in developing a set of procedures, standardized agreements, and memoranda of understanding. The financial, organizational, and publishing aspects must be well understood to properly evaluate whether ASA participation in a particular joint meeting opportunity will benefit our Society. However, it seems clear that most ASA members believe that we should continue to engage in these types of meetings to preserve our leadership role in the field of acoustics. Such meetings also support our members in their desire to maintain a high level of collegial awareness of advancements in the science of acoustics globally.

In recent years, the COM has assisted with the evaluation of proposals for overseas joint meetings on a number of occasions. The committee fosters discussion of such issues as

the interval between such meetings, the value to the Society, financial arrangements, level of interest and expected attendance by Society members, and general feasibility. After a thorough discussion, the members of the COM vote on whether to recommend that the Executive Council and the executive director pursue the option or not, and this recommendation is given careful consideration by the Executive Council in deciding how to proceed.

Summarizing, the COM has an important role in the Society in making sure that our meetings are well organized and that we are responsive to the members' desires in terms of how the meetings are run and where they are held. The ASA is somewhat unique in that it is one of a few professional societies that holds regular meetings of the entire membership twice every year, in a broad variety of cities and with a full program of papers from all of the technical areas within the Society. We are able to do this because members volunteer their time and energy to help plan and organize the meetings. The meetings are in many ways the pulse of the Society, and they contribute greatly to giving the Society its character. For those reasons, we are grateful to the members who agree to assist with a local committee and serve as a local chair. This is one of the most important ways a member can serve our Society. And, of course, an important role for the COM is to provide as much assistance to the local chair and committee as possible.

For those of you who are interested in participating in the COM, have questions or suggestions, or may be interested in proposing a meeting in your city, please feel free to contact me via email (penrod@arlut.utexas.edu). I will be happy to try to answer your questions.



Become Involved!

Would you like to become more involved with the ASA? Visit <https://acousticalsociety.org/volunteer/> to learn more about the Society's technical and administrative committees, and submit a form to express your interest in volunteering!