

Acoustical Society of America Chapters: Form and Function

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History

When the 416 charter members of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) first organized, their goal was “to increase and diffuse the knowledge of acoustics and promote its practical applications” (Schmid and Moran, 2006, p. 36). Few could have predicted the role the Society and its members or their scope of research would play over the next 89 years.

After World War II, with membership and research in acoustics at an all-time high, the ASA formed the “Regional Sections” Committee to address the growing interest of members to form local chapters. Nearly a decade later, in 1954, the Society would enjoy three major moments in their history. The celebration of their 25th anniversary was marked by a banquet in May that was attended by 527 members, a record attendance for an event at that time (Firestone, 1954). During this same banquet, ASA founder Wallace Waterfall was named as the first recipient of the Gold Medal Award. To cap off an already exciting year, the Society saw a dramatic organizational change with the establishment of its first four local chapters.

What Are Chapters?

There are currently two types of chapters associated with ASA, regional and student. These are included as “Administrative Committees” of the ASA. The current chapters are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1. *List of Chapters*

Regional Chapters	Student Chapters
Cascadia Chapter	Austin Texas Student Chapter
Chicago Chapter	Brigham Young University Student Chapter
Greater Boston Chapter	Columbia College Chicago Student Chapter
Los Angeles Chapter	Georgia Tech Student Chapter
Music City Chapter	Northeastern University Chapter
Upper Midwest Chapter	Ohio State Student Chapter
Florida Chapter	Penn State Student Chapter
Narragansett Chapter	Purdue University Student Chapter
Philadelphia Regional Chapter	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Washington, DC Chapter	Seattle Student Chapter
North Carolina Chapter	University of Cincinnati Student Chapter
North Texas Chapter	University of Hartford Student Chapter
	University of Kansas Student Chapter
	University of Nebraska Student Chapter

For more information on and links to the individual Acoustical Society of America regional and student chapters, go to asachapters.org/asa-chapter-locations.

Regional chapters were formed to meet the burgeoning needs of ASA members and are primarily centered on supporting and representing practitioners in the acoustical community. Although some chapters have a primary focus, such as underwater or oceanography, each chapter represents a unique cross-sectional demographic of the 13 technical committees, with many chapters having a wide interdisciplinary makeup of technical committee members.

Student chapters are a somewhat recent addition to the Society, with the first one being formed in 2000. Although fairly new, student chapter members make up 13% of the ASA membership and are vital to promoting Society awareness among up-and-coming graduates as well as supporting them socially, academically, and with their professional development goals. Student chapters “promote a robust sense of community for students within the ASA” (Flynn and Young, 2018, p. 65) through numerous networking and educational events. A great example of this is the four special sessions held each year. These four events don’t just introduce student members to the 13 technical committees but they also serve as an avenue into the acoustical community, with presentations by senior ASA members, poster summaries for various acoustic research programs, and even chances to secure grant/fellowship funding.

Because national meetings occur only twice a year, regional and student chapters are also a great way for members to stay involved with the Society and the acoustician community at the local level. The required minimum of three meetings per year allow regional chapters to actively engage members while keeping the momentum from the most recent national meeting going. Chapters also provide an avenue to include professions, organizations, and experts of similar interest. For instance, in Architectural Acoustics, local chapters have engaged members of both the Audio Engineering Society (AES) and Architectural Institute of America (AIA). The flexibility to engage outside organizations allows chapters and members to further engage manufacturers, consultants, and laboratories. In an effort to help promote involvement and awareness in the Society, participation in local and regional meetings does not require ASA membership.

What Does a Chapter Meeting Look Like?

There are no exact or structured guidelines for chapter meetings. This allows each chapter to develop its own identity and character best suited to serve the local membership. The following is a partial list of what you might expect or experience at your local chapter meeting.

Educational Outreach

Many chapters participate in outreach programs at the local primary and high school levels. Organizations like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and YWCA also serve as great opportunities to reach out to the potential young engineers and acousticians of tomorrow. These programs usually in-

clude engaging, hands-on demonstrations on the physics of acoustics. A great illustration of this is the paper plate loud-speaker demonstration recently given by the Pennsylvania State University (University Park) chapter to a local Girl Scout troop as well as several local schools.

Professional Outreach

Chapters facilitate the transfer and sharing of knowledge between acousticians and professionals in related industries and fields of study. Collaborating with organizations like architectural firms, the AES, the AIA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and many more provide great teaching and learning opportunities for members.

Tours

Many chapters coordinate tours of local acoustical interest for members. For example, the Philadelphia (PA) chapter has toured the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and Community Loud Speaker and is considering a trip to Martin Guitar in Allentown. The Boston (MA) chapter has made several trips to Boston Symphony Hall, and the St. Louis (MO) chapter recently visited the Blues Museum. Tours can be as simple as an unguided walkthrough or as detailed as a guided or even behind the scenes tour and provide a great opportunity for our members to experience and explore the fields of acoustics outside a classroom or laboratory environment.

Technical Talks, Guest Speakers, and Lectures

We, the acoustic community, are fortunate to have numerous opportunities for the interactive synergy and sharing of ideas, learnings, and experiences. Special guests are often invited to local chapters to present as experts in a specific topic. Two great examples are when Dr. Kenneth P. Roy came to the local Philadelphia chapter to give a presentation on design strategies for architectural acoustics and when Dr. Dan Brown recently held a colloquium on underwater imaging systems at the Pennsylvania State University chapter.

Presentations are not limited to acousticians. Anyone in a related field, from educators to industry leaders, is welcome to participate and present. Regional and student chapters further provide local members an opportunity to increase awareness about the Society, share their work, learn from each other, and refine presentations that may be given at the upcoming national meeting. Some chapters even schedule a weekend-long symposium to further help members practice and refine their presentations.

Technical Projects

Popular among student chapters, members participate in a specific project or competition. This may include measurements in an existing field of study or innovating for a unique problem.

The Royster Competition

Thanks to the generous support of Larry and Julia Royster, a chapter-organized poster competition is run once a year, with \$5,000 in scholarship awards. It is open to full-time graduate students enrolled in a program involving acoustics or senior undergraduate students expecting to enroll in such a program. Posters must relate to hearing conservation or noise control to be eligible, with topics including education, sound surveys, engineering and administrative controls, hearing protection, and audiometric evaluations. For more information, please visit acousticstoday.org/roystercomp.

Networking, Social and Fun

Of course, fun is part of any ASA event! Events like the Philadelphia chapter's "Jazz at the Bistro," with good music, food, and friends, give members the opportunity to socialize and get to know their colleagues. Student chapters also hold numerous events throughout the school year, such as the Georgia Tech (Atlanta) Student Chapter Spring Semester-End Seminar and BBQ or the Pennsylvania State University MATLAB Bootcamp.

Each chapter can form fit to the requirements and abilities of their members. With some chapters meeting each month and most quarterly, members gain exposure to numerous unique events, tours, and guest speakers. The sound mixture of business and social networking events ensure each participant has the opportunity to share and grow professionally and as members of the ASA.

Those wishing to start their own regional or student chapter should contact Sandra Guzman (Guzman_Sandy@shure.com) or Ken Good (kwgoodjr@armstrong.com) or check the following website for details on the application, charter, and approval process (acousticstoday.org/asachapters).

Chapters and the Acoustical Society of America Vision

Regional and student chapters are one of the most powerful

opportunities to advance the ASA's Strategic Leadership for the Future Plan. Chapters meet all four of the goals identified at the Strategic Leadership for the Future Summit.

Awareness of Acoustics

Chapters bring the science of acoustics home to the local level and provide an opportunity to engage businesses, organizations, and colleagues of similar interest.

Member Engagement

Through the numerous meetings and events, members can remain engaged locally throughout the year even if traveling to a national meeting is not possible.

Dissemination of Information and Knowledge

Guest speakers, tours, and miniconferences further increase the opportunity of members to share and learn about the science of acoustics and related fields.

Financial Stewardship

Good stewardship is often mistaken for money not spent, but true stewardship is money WELL spent. Investing in the future of the acoustics community through student chapters and engaging sister organizations further promotes meeting each of the strategic initiatives.

The local regional chapters provide excellent opportunities for people with a wide range of interests in acoustics and related fields to get together during the year. Each regional chapter provides an ideal chance for new members to learn about the ASA and to gain experience in managing the affairs of the Society. The chapters should encourage not only membership in the Society but attendance at regular meetings as well.

References

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