



The Acoustical Society of America and Communication: It's Not 1929 Anymore!

When the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) was founded in 1929, the transportation and communication infrastructures were very dif-

ferent. The founders of the ASA wanted a dynamic scientific and practical society with a journal and regular meetings. These ideals have not changed! But the meetings and communication between meetings were limited by the resources available at the time. And the ASA is still transitioning to the way most scientific and technical organizations operate today compared with how it did for most of the twentieth century.

Let's first discuss the meeting themselves because that is where ASA participants do the most communicating. In the 1930s and for decades afterward, the most common transportation to the ASA meetings was by train. Widespread adoption of air travel wouldn't begin until the late 1950s and early 1960s. The current meeting format, two meetings a year, was adopted so that twice a year people could come and go via trains, which could take as much as two days across the United States. This also explains why *all* the ASA committee activities were centered *at* the meetings themselves. Satellite meetings between the main meetings weren't practical because the travel time would be too long to allow for such meetings.

Speaking of communication between meetings, long-distance telephone charges were substantial until the deregulation of the telephone industry in the United States in the early 1980s, when it became possible for ASA members to call each other at a greatly reduced cost. But the model for meetings and committee structures had already been set, and for the most part, the ASA is a two meeting per year organization. Only in recent years have inexpensive teleconferences and Internet software such as Skype, WebEx, GotoMeeting, and Zoom been able to bring members together. More on that in a moment.

Our journal, *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (JASA)*, is the preeminent journal for acoustics in the world. But its primary function is to disseminate published research results, and it never has been the best place for anything other than journal articles and documenting the recorded history of the ASA. So, the ASA tried to bridge that gap with the newsletter

Echoes (now a part of history but excellent for its intended purpose and available until 2013; see acousticalsociety.org/echoes).

Now we have an excellent magazine, *Acoustics Today* (*AT*; acousticstoday.org). *AT*, besides providing interesting articles on various topics of acoustics that are written so that they can be read by all members, helps members get to know about activities in the Society, and it also stands as a great on-ramp for those outside the ASA to get to know us and see what we do. In *AT*, you can hear from the current president and others to give you a glimpse of contemporary topics ongoing in the Society, for example, the article you are reading now. At the same time, *AT* is not a "news" magazine and only has limited coverage of ASA activities, mostly focusing on broad issues such as introducing members to the "big picture" roles of committees and technical committees.

The ASA also communicates with members through its email, through its website (acousticalsociety.org), and via social media outlets. Email is a delicate balance because with too few emails, members feel they are not in the know. And members simply ignore too many emails. And there are some busy members who just don't respond well to email, period!

The ASA website has undergone a number of revisions, and it's mostly a repository of information that both ASA members and outsiders go to learn what is going on in the Society. So, keeping the repository up-to-date is important, but it has never been a great vehicle for two-way dialog.

The social media outlets are also great for sending out news from the "top down," but only a fraction of ASA members subscribe to them. It's much more effective for younger members who are more likely to subscribe. Across all of these outlets for information (email, web page, and social media), there is little to no coordination and consistency and that should be improved.

How can the ASA do better? How can ASA members be more involved and engaged year-round? There are lot of ideas floating around ASA headquarters, the Executive Council (EC), and the Technical Council (and we always welcome ideas from members as well; please drop me a note with any thoughts you might have to improve the ASA). We will talk more about the new task forces formed at the ASA Louisville meeting in a future column, but one of those new task forces focuses on "Improved Communications and Public Relations." One concept being discussed is whether the ASA needs a communication strategist to look at

how ASA communicates and how it can do so more effectively. Hopefully, you will hear more on this in the coming months.

Teleconferences and remote meetings via the Internet are the way of today and the future. In the past, the EC only met at the ASA spring and fall meetings, but with the fast-changing dynamic of today, monthly teleconferences have been initiated between the Louisville and San Diego meetings and again between the San Diego and Chicago meetings. Mainly, the teleconferences are to keep the EC members up-to-date on the business of the Society. Although formal voting is not typical on teleconferences, discussions certainly can occur. This is a great way to ensure that the EC members are better prepared and informed when they vote at the face-to-face meetings.

Some other ASA committees and task forces may also want to have regular teleconferences or Internet meetings, although monthly meetings may not be needed. Some may simply want to have a teleconference or Internet meeting a month or so before the face-to-face meetings to be ready. Another advantage of such teleconferences is to be inclusive, particularly with ASA members who traditionally cannot, for whatever reason, make either the fall or spring meeting on a regular basis. There is a lot of untapped capacity for good sitting outside the ASA meetings, and we can include those ideas and energy if we are friendly toward and inclusive of ASA members who can't travel.

ASA started out in 1929 with a great journal and train travel. I think we can do much better communicating in 2019 and beyond! Please let me know your thoughts via email (president@acousticalsociety.org). If you want, we can set up a telephone call or an Internet meeting to discuss your ideas!

Addendum

I do want to let you know about a very important milestone that was crossed in Louisville. David Feit, who has served as ASA Treasurer for the last 20 years, stepped down to make way for a new, elected treasurer with a 3-year term. We honored David in Louisville, where he received the ASA Distinguished Service Citation. But if you see David at another meeting, please join me in thanking him for his dedicated service to the ASA.

I am pleased to announce that our newly elected treasurer is Judy Dubno. She was president from 2014 to 2015 and has been

very active in the affairs of the Society over the last decade. We certainly want to wish Judy well with her new responsibilities!

The other results of our annual election are as follows: Diane Kewley-Port, president-elect; Stan Dosso, vice president-elect; and Bennett Brooks and Andrew Morrison, EC. Everyone on the EC is really looking forward to the contributions of these dynamic individuals!

From the Editor

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I was most excited because the AMNH is very close to my heart, having worked there in the Ichthyology Department as an undergraduate (and where I first was shown the ear of a fish, the structure that would ultimately become the focus of my research) and then having done my doctoral work in the AMNH Department of Animal Behavior.

In the third essay, ASA Education and Outreach Coordinator L. Keeta Jones continues with her discussions of various outreach efforts being made by the ASA, this time on the issue of noise awareness. Finally, the ASA continues to be an active participant in the International Science and Engineering Fair. The last essay by Inder Raj Makin describes the latest fair and the efforts that the ASA makes to recognize international high-school students for their research in various aspects of acoustics.

Finally, as mentioned many times before, if any reader has an idea for an article that might be of interest to the broad ASA audience, please contact me (apopper@umd.edu). We also welcome ideas for essays on topics of direct relevance to the function of the ASA (as the essay by Keeta) or interesting activities of ASA members (as the essay by Kelly). Because I am often asked, we do not do essays on commercial products.

