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Noise Awareness Outreach Efforts

It is clear that members of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) have an interest in noise awareness and outreach; however, active participation has waxed and waned through the years. In this essay, I share what I have learned about the historic involvement of the ASA in noise awareness before moving on to the Society's noise outreach resurgence. I conclude with a discussion of future plans, including the International Year of Sound (IYS) in 2020.

A discussion of noise awareness in the Society must start with the ASA Standards Program. As the ASA Standards Director from 1972 to 1979, Henning von Gierke's interest in noise became the focus of a joint sectional committee made up of the Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) S1, Physical Acoustics, and ASC S3, Bioacoustics. The joint committee was eventually disbanded with the establishment of ASC S12, Noise, in 1981, with the approval of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Standards for noise continue to be an important issue for the ASA, considering that ASC S12 is the largest committee and is responsible for the most standards (Blaeser and Struck, 2019). However, outside of standards, noise awareness outreach did not gain momentum for another 10 years.

In the fall of 1991, members of the Technical Committee on Noise (TCN) formed a Noise Task Group to discuss how and if the ASA should be involved in developing policies for noise control and noise effects (Brooks et al., 1994). The Noise Task Group held a workshop in 1993 at the 125th ASA meeting to identify key issues and propose action for noise and its control. Workshop attendees identified needs in education, research, standards, and regulations, such as developing hearing loss demonstrations, tracking government activities, and hosting ASA special sessions (for the full forum report, see Brooks et al., 1995). After the workshop and up to 1995, the ASA had several special noise sessions and even hearing tests on-site, which reflected a growing societal interest and commitment to increasing and contributing to noise awareness.

The ASA even took this commitment to increasing noise awareness beyond meeting activities. Between 1993 and 1995, the ASA cosponsored "Save Your Hearing Day" on May 31 alongside the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), the Institute of Noise Control Engineering (INCE), and the Military Audiology Association (MAA). In observance of the 1995 Save Your Hearing Day, free hearing tests were provided outside the Smithsonian Institution (Anon, 1995).

Then, in 1996, the Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC; formerly the League for the Hard of Hearing) established the first "International Noise Awareness Day" (INAD), and in support, the ASA sent copies of a special printing of the *Noise Control Engineering Journal* entitled *Noise Control-Where We Stand Today* (von Gierke and Johnson, 1996), which contained papers presented during the technical



Figure 1. Image of World Hearing Day edit-a-thon organizational supporters that was shared on Acoustical Society of America social media platforms.

session “Noise: State of the Art-Noise Effects and Control” at the 129th ASA meeting (Shaw, 1995). The special issue was sent to members of the US Congress, encouraging support for a proposed law that was meant to reestablish the Office of Noise Abatement and Control in the Environmental Protection Agency. Despite being reintroduced several times, the latest attempt to pass the law failed in 2006.

After 1998, ASA noise outreach activities began to wane, and it was not until 2010, 18 years after the start of the first efforts, that the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) staff were invited to speak about the “It’s a Noisy Planet” campaign to the Education in Acoustics Committee during the 159th joint ASA and Noise-Con meeting (noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov). Shortly thereafter, the campaign was described in *Acoustics Today* (Wenger, 2010). Given these activities, it seemed that the noise awareness outreach was again gaining popularity; however, it was not until January 2018 when Task Force 1 (TF1) of the ASA Strategic Plan developed a plan to institutionalize INAD and other

noise outreach activities within the Society (for an overview of the 2015 Strategic Plan, see Stinson, 2016).

In 2018, TF1 members organized and promoted INAD activities to increase noise awareness and encourage the public to interact with the ASA (for the full INAD report, see Jones, 2018, in *Acoustics Today*). To maintain and extend these efforts, TF1 was shifted to the TCN as an INAD subcommittee. While the INAD subcommittee was organizing soundwalks, a science of sound workshop, and a media campaign, I began working with staff from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, National Center for Environmental Health, and the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, to support “World Hearing Day” on March 3, 2019, with a Wikipedia edit-a-thon to improve and expand hearing related articles ([Wiki4WorldHearingDay2019](https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Wikidata:Wiki4WorldHearingDay2019); ow.ly/qwNI50ux7YE; **Figure 1**).

Because many members of the INAD subcommittee were interested in the edit-a-thon and other noise awareness outreach, the name was changed to the Noise Awareness Subcommittee (NAS) to reflect the need and want to do outreach beyond the INAD. The new mission statement of the NAS is to introduce concepts related to noise to equip and empower the public to get involved and to take action in protecting and shaping their sound environment. For 2020, the NAS plans to address World Hearing Day in March, the INAD in April, North American Occupational Safety and Health Week in May, Better Hearing and Speech month in May, and Protect Your Hearing month in October among other events.

More events may be added to the NAS list as the International Commission for Acoustics (ICA) declared 2020 as the IYS (**Figure 2**; sound2020.org). *La Semaine du Son* (*The Week of Sound*) in France will kick off IYS 2020, with President Victor Sparrow and Executive Director Susan Fox representing the ASA (for an overview of *La Semaine du Son*, see Accolti, 2017, in *Acoustics Today*). President Sparrow has also formed an ad hoc IYS committee to plan and coordinate ASA-IYS activities, and those interested should email him (president@acousticalsociety.org). The mission of the IYS is to highlight the importance of sound in all aspects of life



Figure 2. The founding member organizations of the International Year of Sound 2020.

on Earth and to work toward an understanding of sound-related issues at the international level. Although the ad hoc IYS committee will work closely with the NAS, they will also address sound more broadly, beyond the mission statement of the NAS. The ad hoc IYS committee will support the IYS in a way that represents the interdisciplinary nature of acoustics. (Also note that this issue of *Acoustics Today* has three articles on noise and how it affects the health and well-being of humans and animals.)

Next year will be a great time for the ASA to fully commit to increasing noise awareness both within and beyond our Society. As the dedicated education and outreach coordinator, I will continue to support noise awareness outreach efforts for as long as I have the support of ASA members. If you would like to be involved with noise awareness initiatives, please feel free to contact me via email (kjones@acousticalsociety.org) or phone (516-576-2364).

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