

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MAKING ACOUSTICS ACCESSIBLE: PART II—MEETINGS

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This issue of *Acoustics Today* contains an article on the history of the Society's first 75 years. Elaine Moran and I originally wrote it for publication as one of the sections of the 75th Anniversary book "ASA at 75." That book was given to everyone who attended the 75th anniversary meeting of the Society in May 2004 and is still available for purchase. We thought the article might be of interest to members who did not attend the meeting, and it was decided to republish it in *Acoustics Today*.

The various formats by which the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) provides written material was covered in a one page article I wrote, "Making Acoustics Accessible: 1929 Until Today," which appeared in the January 2006 issue of *Acoustics Today*. Meetings provide another important avenue by which the Acoustical Society makes acoustics accessible.

ASA meetings have occurred twice each year since 1930 except during World War II (1942-45) when only one meeting a year was held. Today meeting attendance averages around 1,000 registrants. Meetings which have attracted significantly higher than average attendance include the International Congress on Acoustics meeting in Seattle in 1998 (2,100) and the joint meeting with the European Acoustics Association in Berlin in 1999 (2,300). There are over 1,600 abstracts scheduled for presentation at the upcoming joint meeting with the Acoustical Society of Japan in Hawaii, and it is expected to attract around 2,000 attendees from around the world. Given that the ASA has over 7,000 members, it is apparent that many members are not able to attend meetings and therefore miss many opportunities.

Opportunities for authors and other meeting participants

One of the obvious reasons for hosting ASA meetings is to provide a forum for authors to present their latest work. Authors are allowed a maximum of 200 words in their abstracts, and the time allotted for presentation of papers does not afford authors time to cover the details of their work in depth. But what it does provide is a venue for acousticians to broadcast their work to a wider audience—and to receive feedback. Members in the audience who work in the same field, or even work in similar ones with applicable techniques, can share their research and development, often lead-



ing to international cooperation. I have heard a number of authors of seminal papers recall an earlier time when they first presented their ideas at ASA meetings. First-time paper presenters are also given the opportunity to improve their communication capabilities, an important skill that all of us need.

In addition to technical paper presentations, the 13 technical committees of the Society and the Committee on Education in Acoustics meet during each meeting to discuss many action items such as setting special sessions for future meetings. Everyone is encour-

aged to attend these open technical committee meetings that play a large part in the future direction of their disciplines. Likewise, Standards committees and working groups also meet at ASA meetings.

Opportunities for acousticians and the public

The ASA does not require authors to submit full papers or anything else beyond a 200 word abstract. However, authors are encouraged to submit their papers or presentation materials to the Online Meeting Papers website at <asa.aip.org>. Not enough presenters take advantage of this service to the disappointment of both people in attendance as well as those who were not able to attend. Even authors' power point presentations can provide helpful information to understand the work described in meeting abstracts. The ASA also selects abstracts on topics that have the potential to be of broader interest to the non-scientist and asks the authors to write lay language papers to be placed on the ASA's "World Wide Pressroom" at <www.acoustics.org>. A press release is created and distributed to reporters around the world based on these and other interesting abstracts. Combining this release with the diligence and writing skills of authors has dramatically increased the level of publicity for acoustics and the Acoustical Society. Please visit the Word Wide Pressroom and take a look at these interesting papers.

Early accessibility of meeting information

Travel plans to attend meetings often need to be made early, and many members may not be aware that ASA provides meeting information via its home page long before the printed programs are sent by postal mail. A technical program summary consisting only of a list of session titles is published online about four months before each meeting,

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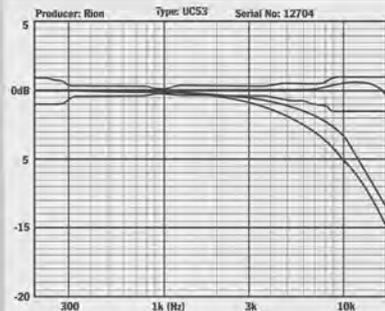
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and the abstracts are posted on line in a searchable format about 2 months before a meeting. In addition, the same meeting program that members receive in the mail is available in pdf format about one month before the meeting. In order to download this program, you must have access to the online version of the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, which most members can obtain as a benefit of their ASA membership.

Student accessibility

About 250 students attend each meeting. Student participation in meetings has increased dramatically since the establishment of the ASA Student Council. Students have expressed their appreciation to the Society for keeping its registration fees for ASA students at zero essentially through support from other registrants. A student reception is held at

each meeting to enable students to meet each other and to provide an opportunity to meet recognized acousticians whose books or papers they have admired. At one meeting a student from South America asked me if "that was Leo Beranek across the room." I introduced the student to Leo, and this student was truly delighted. We continue to increase accessibility within our Society.

Improvement of meetings

The report of the Vision 2010 Committee, which appeared in the previous issue of *Acoustics Today*, listed a number of ways to improve meetings, and I welcome any comments and suggestions (asa@aip.org) for improving meetings as a vehicle to provide even greater accessibility of information for members.

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