

From the President

Victor Sparrow



How the Acoustical Society of America Works: A Bird's Eye View in Both Great Times and Challenging Times

One of the privileges of serving as the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) president is that you get to see the entire organization in action. The Executive Council, the Technical Council, ASA Headquarters, and our many, many passionate and dedicated volunteers all work toward making the ASA the best it can be. By the time you read this article, Diane Kewley-Port will have succeeded me as president. But as I write this article in late March 2020 and while I am still ASA President, I have a view of our organization that I want to share with each of you. I have seen the ASA in great times (e.g., International Year of Sound, an increasing impact factor for *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*) and in challenging times (COVID-19). And each of you should know how the ASA works and operates on your behalf, particularly considering the astounding and unprecedented events occurring in 2020.

Regardless of the issue of the day, ASA Headquarters, led by our Executive Director Susan Fox, is always on the job making sure that things are running smoothly. If you call the ASA, most likely it would be Elaine Moran, our director of operations, who will pick up the telephone and talk to you. But the ASA Headquarters also has a larger group of dedicated individuals ready to help members and support them in many ways. The ASA Headquarters is responsible for the ASA meetings and all member services, among other duties.

The vice president, currently Peggy Nelson, who will be succeeded by Stan Dosso, leads the Technical Council. The Technical Council is the body of Technical Committee chairs who are responsible for assembling the technical sessions and technical committee meetings. The technical sessions are the lifeblood of what makes up our meetings, and we applaud the Technical Committees for everything they do.

The Executive Council, chaired by the ASA president, is composed of the elected officers and members who represent you as the ASA policy-making body. Through appropriate councils chaired by Executive Council members, all ASA administrative committees report through the Executive Council. The Executive Council is a “strategic body” and aims to both think ahead and to react to the world’s changing conditions. A number of other parts of the ASA also report to the Executive Council, including all ASA publications through Editor in Chief Jim Lynch, the ASA standards program through Standards Manager Christopher Struck, and the ASA executive director. But because the Executive Council is the policy-making body, it delegates the day-to-day operations of the ASA through the editor in chief, the standards director, and the executive director. And we are very fortunate that they are all doing a fantastic job!

There are a few other special individuals who you should be aware of as well. One is L. Keeta Jones, our education and outreach coordinator. Ms. Jones reports to the executive director. Another is our Finance Director Mike McGovern who, as an employee, reports to the executive director and, at the same time, works very closely with our elected treasurer, currently Judy Dubno. I would be absolutely remiss if I didn’t also point out how much of what we do in the ASA is led directly by the volunteers serving as chairs and members of our administrative, technical, and meeting committees. The ASA is so very much driven by such volunteers, and this is not typical among today’s large scientific societies.

It takes a team to deal with the day-to-day work of the ASA, and we are fortunate to have such great individuals involved and engaged. I’ll now give you two examples in how the team has responded to very different situations in the last few months.

January 2020 began a special year, designated the International Year of Sound (IYS) by the International Commission for Acoustics (ICA; see sound2020.org). Realizing that this was a special activity, probably once

in a lifetime, the ASA formed an ad hoc committee on the IYS last summer, cochaired by L. Keeta Jones and myself. The ASA meetings in 2020 were designated as IYS meetings. The ICA held a worldwide IYS opening event in Paris, France, at the Sorbonne on January 31, 2020. On behalf of the ASA, both the executive director and I attended, and a recording of the entire ceremony is available online at sound2020.org. **Figure 1** shows Dr. Mark Hamilton of the ASA participating in the opening event as the president of ICA.

Then, on February 13, 2020, the Washington, DC, Regional Chapter of the ASA hosted the United States opening celebration for the IYS in collaboration with ASA Headquarters. This event was hosted by the American Institute of Physics in College Park, MD, and both Keeta and I were able to attend, as were many individuals from the American Institute of Physics (AIP) staff and ASA members from around the Washington, DC, area. In addition to showing some short ASA-related IYS videos, we had two speakers address the group in College Park. They were Josef Rauschecker from Georgetown University who talked about “Auditory Perception and Action” and Gary Gottlieb from the Audio Engineering Society who spoke about “The Evolution of Audio.” A recording of the entire US IYS opening program, including these talks, is available on the ASA Facebook page. A particularly special thank you goes out

Figure 1. Dr. Mark Hamilton, Acoustical Society of America (ASA) member and former ASA president, addresses the International Year of Sound opening celebration as president of the International Commission for Acoustics, Sorbonne University, Paris, France, January 31, 2020.



to David Lechner, chair of the Washington, DC, Regional Chapter for making this all happen.

In addition to the opening ceremonies, there are other IYS events coming to student and regional chapters of the ASA. A special online-only issue of *Acoustics Today* has been prepared by *Acoustics Today* Editor in Chief Arthur Popper in very close collaboration with L. Keeta Jones and ASA Editorial Assistant Kat Setzer. The Special Issue is available at bit.ly/3dxCju1. The Special Issue is aimed at outreach to make students, teachers, and others in local, state, and federal governments more aware of the importance of acoustics and sound generally in our society. Indeed, Keeta will be distributing copies of the Special Issue at many events around the country in the coming year. I also encourage all members to share the link to the Special Issue with their students, colleagues, and even their children’s (and grandchildren’s) teachers.

Moreover, led by the Public Relations Committee and its chair Laura Kloepper, the ASA is partnering with AIP Media Services to generate a number of short videos and press releases throughout 2020 to engage the public and let them know about sound in this special year. The IYS has been a great example of how all of ASA can come together and address a special year-long event on a fixed time schedule. See bit.ly/39w1yJH for the videos and the latest information.

At the same time, the world had to change its collective ways in a hurry in March 2020 when the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) struck across the globe. Clearly, the virus has made a major impact on all ASA members and the organization itself. Indeed, as this article is being written, all the stakeholders such as ASA Headquarters, the councils, the administrative and technical committees, and individual ASA members are figuring out how the next year of meetings will be navigated.

The ASA officers and managers had their spring 2020 meeting on March 12, and many options were being considered for the meetings, including canceling, delaying, or shifting to online only. A plan to move forward quickly was established a few days later, and thanks go to ASA Headquarters for their speedy work. Given that many government laboratories, universities, and businesses have canceled all foreign travel for the foreseeable future, the decision was made to cancel the planned

November 2020 meeting in Cancun, Mexico, and to delay the Chicago meeting to the next opportunity when the original Chicago hotel would be available. We thank the Cancun organizers and are very disappointed that we had to cancel.

As you all know by now, the next ASA meeting will be held in Chicago from December 8–12, 2020, a Tuesday-Saturday schedule. One fallout from not having the spring 2020 meeting is that the ASA very much needs to continue the work of its administrative groups and committees, even without a meeting. Thus, ASA Headquarters and the ASA Executive Council are developing plans so that these meetings can take place via teleconferences at about the same time.

Furthermore, the ASA Technical Council is strategizing how the technical program in Chicago will be carried forward to the December 2020 meeting. Part of the issue is that some special sessions may stay in Chicago

while other special session organizers may prefer that the sessions be postponed until the spring 2021 meeting in Seattle, WA. Similarly, the special sessions and other conference elements originally planned for Cancun may occur in Chicago or be postponed until Seattle.

As I write this article, we do not know how the technical program and administrative committee meeting schedules are going to work out. But I do know that all involved in the decision making are working hard to ensure that the culture of the ASA is preserved, to the extent possible, and that we continue to make our meetings valuable to our members. This is a very challenging time, and 2020 has turned out to be one of the more challenging years in our collective memory, but I believe that the ASA has a great organization, and we are well positioned to deal with anything put in front of us, either good or bad. I thank you all for the special opportunity to lead a great organization like the ASA, and I hope this bird's-eye view (from a Sparrow) was useful.

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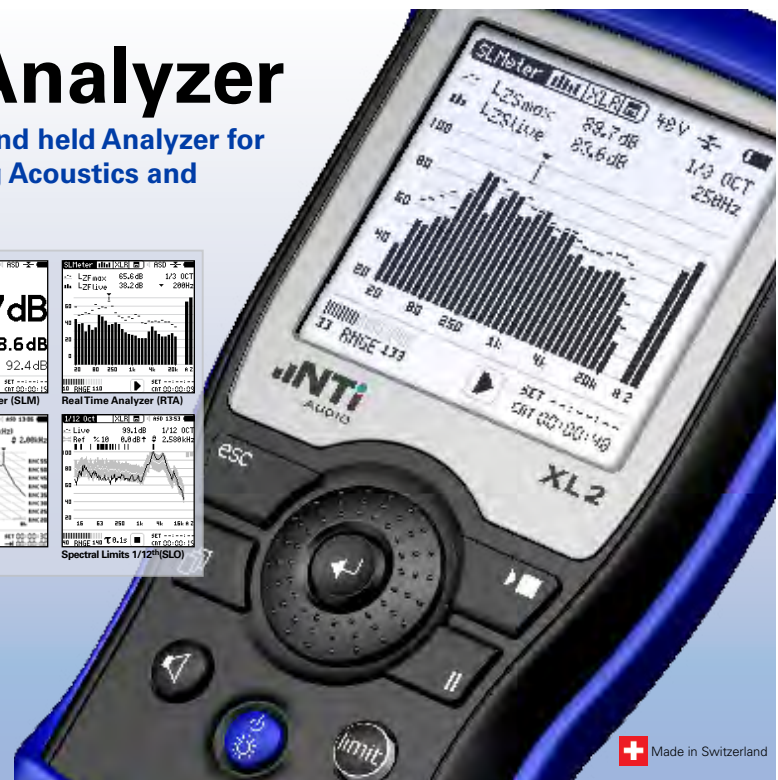
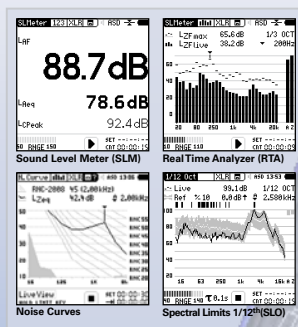
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