

From the President

Diane Kewley-Port



Decisions, Transitions and Opportunities for the Acoustical Society of America in 2020

As I write this column at the end of June 2020, it is my hope that by fall you, your family, and your community will be in healthier and safer circumstances. The Acoustical Society of America (ASA) will continue to adjust on how to best serve our members and friends during these unpredictable times. This spring, we demonstrated that the ASA can navigate unknown waters and make very rapid changes to keep our Society strong. This report reviews some of these actions and describes exciting plans for our future publications and meetings.

Figure 1. Left to right: Diane Kewley-Port, Vic Sparrow, and Lily Wang.



Happy 90th Anniversary!
Louisville, KY
(May 13-17, 2019)

First, let me start with introductions. ASA volunteers lead our Society, and they change over at each spring meeting. It was just a year ago that **Figure 1** was taken at the Louisville, KY, meeting. Vic Sparrow became president, Lily Wang transitioned to past president, and I became president-elect. Lily Wang made the selfie frame as part of the celebrations in Louisville for the 90th anniversary of the founding of the ASA. Now I have transitioned to president under very different circumstances, but a term that holds many opportunities.

A Bit About Me

I have been preparing for the mantle of president of the ASA throughout my life. Engineering school at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) provided the foundation for my career. I continued for my master's there in Communications and Computer Sciences. Based on the speech acoustics coursework, in 1967, I was hired as a research assistant in the Neurocommunications Laboratory at The Johns Hopkins Hospital (Baltimore, MD). This research on the developing speech of infants allowed me to attend my first ASA meeting in Miami Beach.

The ASA has been my professional society home ever since because acoustics is exciting and interesting, and the social support of younger members is ingrained in ASA's character. For example, although women in engineering and the ASA were indeed rare, I felt welcome and encouraged to pursue my passion for research in speech acoustics. Therefore, I entered doctoral studies at The Graduate School, City University of New York, where I was mentored by Katherine S. Harris, who later was the first woman awarded the ASA Gold Medal. I completed my doctoral studies in speech sciences, albeit slowed a little as the mother of a son and twin daughters.

Beginning in 1976 at Indiana University (Bloomington), the majority of my career has focused on laboratory research and teaching. My best-known research in speech perception demonstrated that for understanding sentences,

vowels contribute more information to intelligibility than consonants. To apply acoustics more broadly, in 1990, colleagues and I founded a small business, Communications Disorders Technology, to develop a computer-based speech training aid. Straddling academics and business in my career has been very satisfying. Throughout the years, it has been especially meaningful to have served the ASA in many capacities: on the Technical Council, consulting for online publications, and in leadership.

Changes in The Acoustical Society of America Meetings 2020

It is an honor to have been elected in 2019 to serve as president of the ASA. However, my expectations for the presidency were abruptly altered in spring 2020 when the governor of Illinois prohibited conferences due to the pandemic. The ASA and most scientific societies faced difficult decisions about their forthcoming meetings. President Sparrow and Executive Director Susan Fox worked rapidly to make significant meeting changes in the May 2020 meeting by rescheduling that meeting to December 2020. Regrettably, these changes led to the cancellation of the Cancun (Mexico) meeting, a meeting that has been popular and successful twice before. However, after only one month as ASA president, I am overseeing still more changes in 2020 meetings because of the uncertainty of the pandemic. Our December meeting will now be virtual, as I describe in more detail below. First, I report how the ASA conducted administrative meetings online in May 2020.

To make future plans for ASA meetings, leadership decided that the ASA administrative and business meetings planned for May would be held online. An immense thank you goes to our amazing ASA staff who worked hard to schedule and manage about 50 administrative meetings online. Working along with the Executive Council and meeting chairs, Zoom, GoToMeeting, and other online platforms were selected and mastered. Security features had to be implemented to allow executive sessions to be completely private. On the other hand, high attendance was to be encouraged, along with voting, for the open meetings of the Technical Committees (TCs). Indeed, these open TC meetings were well attended, with Architectural Acoustics having 118 participants and several others over 90.

Yet a missing component in May was the Plenary Session open to the whole Society. Our Plenary honors our awardees, introduces the new Fellows, and provides updates about the status of the Society, especially future meetings. In the spirit of the Plenary, be sure to check out the videos on our home page (see acousticalsociety.org) that the leadership recorded. President Sparrow read the names of the medals and prize winners who will be acknowledged appropriately at the December Plenary (listed in this issue on page 70). Vice President Nelson recognized the achievements of the newly elected Fellows who will also be acknowledged at the next Plenary. For my first video, I talked about plans for future meetings and thanked President Sparrow and Vice President Nelson for their outstanding year of service to the ASA.

A very important outcome of the online administrative meetings came from the Technical Council. Hooray for the chairs of each technical area and Vice President Peggy Nelson who rearranged previously offered special sessions to enable exciting and vibrant special sessions for coming meetings. About 60 special sessions were scheduled for the December meeting and an additional 75 for the spring 2021 meeting in Seattle (WA). These commitments assure that the acoustics shared at our scientific meetings will continue to be strong. The expectation is that most of the special sessions scheduled for December will still be presented in one of the many virtual formats that are available for us to choose from.

In May, the Executive Council heard additional evidence of the ASA position as a global leader in acoustics based on news from in our publications. In our flagship publication, *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (JASA)*, both the number of submissions and number of published articles in 2019 increased and, so far, look comparable this year. The themed Special Issues have exceeded expectations in readership. The big news is that final plans for *JASA Express Letters* to become its own independent journal are in place. This online-only journal, to be called *JASA Express Letters*, will begin January 1, 2021 (see the “Sound Perspectives” piece in the summer 2020 issue of *Acoustics Today* for details; available at bit.ly/2Ylpy00). It will have upgraded features such as becoming a Gold open-access publication. Also notable for publications was

the revised format for *Acoustics Today* that refreshes its look and improves readability.

Acoustics Virtually Everywhere

Finally, I wish to assure our membership that plans are in progress so that practitioners and scientists alike will have an excellent experience at the fall 2020 meeting now entitled “Acoustics Virtually Everywhere.” Working with the leadership, the Meetings Committee, and our staff, in April I established a Virtual Technology Task Force to consider integration of virtual technology into our scientific sessions. We already have experience and knowledge about virtual meetings for small groups from the spring administrative meetings. The Task Force is examining all types of ASA scientific sessions (e.g., oral, poster, panel discussion, hands-on) to find good options to continue to make acoustic presentations personal and

exciting. We can also continue our tradition of strongly supporting our student and early career acousticians with online technology. Early on in this research, we realized that, in fact, there are many opportunities to improve significantly on the effectiveness and attendance to our sessions. Virtual technology can also support a Plenary Session, virtual exhibits, and most importantly, ways for social networking and dialogue to occur.

In this unpredictable world, the ASA watchword is flexibility, and we will be prepared for whatever comes. I am very optimistic that acoustic science and applications will continue to be shared at meetings and that the ASA will take advantage of many new opportunities in 2020 and beyond. It gives me great satisfaction to serve as president. I invite you to participate with me in this amazing Society.



Acoustics Virtually Everywhere

179th Meeting
The Acoustical Society of America
7-11 December 2020

