

Student and Regional Chapters: The Grass Roots of the ASA

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Introduction

This essay is part of a continuing series in *Acoustics Today* to highlight the student perspectives of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA). You can read more about the role of the council in Flynn and Young (2018) and Canney (2008) or you can check out our website (see asastudents.org). The authors of this essay are members of the Student Council.

A small percent of members of the ASA are part of the student and regional chapters that represent affiliated groups for universities and more general geographical areas. In the downtime between society-wide conferences, these groups represent the ASA core values by introducing acoustics research to their local communities. The first four local chapters were established after World War II (Good and Mauck, 2018) while the first student chapter, located at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, was approved in 2004 (Flynn and Young, 2018). There are now 14 student chapters and 11 regional groups (see asachapters.org/asa-chapter-locations). Since their inception, student and regional chapters have given tours of research establishments, expanded the reach of the ASA, collaborated with acoustics professionals, invited guest speakers, and engaged in community service activities. As a Society, it is important that we support these passionate proprietors of acoustics so that they can continue their work and survive through the sometimes inconsistent bursts of member turnover.

International Growth

Recently, regional chapters have sought to grow their efforts to the international stage. One regional chapter has worked to expand on the meaning of “America” that is central to the Society’s name. The Spanish-speaking Acousticians in the Americas Chapter was approved in December 2019 and whose mission is “...conectar a los interesados en la acústica y el sonido en el área geográfica de América Latina,” or “to connect those interested in

acoustics and sound in the geographic area of Latin America” (see bit.ly/3jYpnAv). This expansion covers an area of over 20 million square kilometers, with already over 100 registered members across 14 countries. In their short, yet active, tenure, they have promoted multiple webinars that included a panel featuring acoustic consultants, talks on home studios partnered with the Student Section of the Audio Engineering Society in Ecuador, and many other events.

International expansion is not limited to Latin America, as demonstrated by the recently created East and South-East Asia (ESEA) Regional Chapter, with primary headquarters in Hong Kong (see asaesea.org). The goal of the ESEA Regional Chapter is to promote professional development in acoustics in the region, and in April 2019, they celebrated with a Charter Ceremony with officers from the chapter and special guests (**Figure 1**). No time was wasted; a workshop on “Soundscapes of Building Environments” was held in Singapore, organized in coordination with the National University of Singapore and the Macau Institute of Acoustics.

Community Outreach

One of the most important activities of the ASA student and regional chapters is engagement with members of their local community. Student interaction and exposure at all levels and backgrounds is arguably the most important step in introducing a diverse group of curious minds to the study of sound. These activities are especially important to bring the underrepresented communities into the realm of acoustics as the ASA looks to improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Society-wide (see the “Sound Perspectives” essay by Porter on page 75 and the From the President column on page 7 for more information). The student and regional chapters occupy a unique niche within the broader Society. Compared with the community outreach and engagement events at the week-long twice annual Society meetings, many



Figure 1. Members of the East-South-East Asia Regional Chapter at their Charter Ceremony. *Left to right:* Siu-Kit Lau, Maurice K.L. Yeung, Wong Kam Sing, Ji-Qing Wang, Lo Wai Kwok, King-Kwong Iu, Andy Chung, and Cheuk M. Mak.

chapters are active in community activities year-round. The student chapter at the University of Texas at Austin (see atascasa.org) annually participates in the university-wide “Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day,” where girls from middle schools in the surrounding Austin area come to learn about various STEM fields (Figure 2).

Similarly, the Georgia Tech (GT), Atlanta, student chapter (see b.gatech.edu/2Ej7jAR) participates in the Technology, Engineering, and Computing Camp at GT (wie.gatech.edu/tec-camp) that was created to introduce middle-school girls to the topics of its namesake. Members from the Penn State (PSU), University Park, Student Chapter (see psuasa.org) participate in multiple

school fairs, PSU open houses, and events for visually impaired high-school students. Interaction with students who have progressed in their education is also important, such as the Student Audio Summit at Webster University where the St. Louis, MO, Regional Chapter conducted an ASA acoustics panel. The spark of interest in acoustics can happen at any age or educational stage, and by participating in outreach events, future generations of acousticians are strengthened in numbers and passion.

Virtually Everywhere

Meetings are an integral part of the functionality of regional and student chapters and provide a venue to host organized events and facilitate planning of future endeavors. Sometimes it is challenging to meet in person and conduct events due to the size of a region, travel costs, or unexpected worldwide pandemics. After the cancellation of the spring 2020 ASA conference, the Florida Regional Chapter held their spring 2020 meeting online. They featured presentations of 8 papers 3 three different technical committees with attendance of 23 members. Similarly, WebEx meetings allowed University of Hartford, Hartford, CT, students (see bit.ly/2FuojEE) in many locations like Alaska, Chicago, IL, and Florida to attend presentations on “Creation of a New ASTM Standard” and “Running an Acoustics Consulting Business in the Age of Coronavirus.” Talks featured speakers from an acoustics consulting firm in Southern California and were very well received, according Hartford Student Chapter advisor Bob Celmer. Meanwhile, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, student chapter (see umichasa.org) sought to make use of virtual technologies to rejuvenate its membership by organizing a rotating presentation with the Columbia College Chicago Student

Figure 2. University of Texas at Austin students (left to right) Matthew Zeh, John Cormack, Alicia Casacchia, and Tyler McGee explaining basic acoustic principles through demonstrations to Girl Day participants.



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Chapter (see bit.ly/2Efg7Yt) and other groups to create a wider range of opportunities to learn about acoustics. Hosting a webinar for a local or distant chapter is a great way to interact with fellow acousticians, early or twilight career, to the benefit of all involved and at the chapter level is much more manageable than for the society as a whole.

Collaborations and Contributions

Working together speeds up progress, both inter- and intra-chapter. Collaborating with others is a great way to gain different perspectives and grow. The Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, Student Chapter (see bit.ly/3kYcZRq) invited Dan Russell from Penn State to present to their acoustics research group on understanding the physics of various sports equipment (Russell, 2017). Meetings like these can connect students looking to pursue an academic career in acoustics by introducing them to potential advisors. Representatives from various Indiana-based consulting and recording equipment companies were guest speakers for the students of the Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, Student Chapter (see bit.ly/346S5K2).

Sometimes, coming together is a necessary step in honoring those whose contributions to a chapter were exceptional. The North Carolina Chapter (see ncrcasa.org) recently lost two important members, Larry Royster (Berger, 2019) and Fred Schafer and honored them at a virtual meeting in May 2020. Larry and his wife Julia (Figure 3) gave generous support to introduce a poster competition on hearing conservation and noise control. The competition is organized by a volunteering regional and student chapter with \$5,000 in prizes for outstanding projects (see bit.ly/3kX85Ew). The

acoustics community is just that, a community. By reaching out and connecting professionals and outside academics to students and interested groups, it creates a great way to share new ideas. Exemplified by Larry's case, these connections can create a lasting impression on students for years to come.

Continuing to Evolve

The student and regional chapters are hugely important to the future, culture, and ideals of the ASA. The interest, passions, and communities formed through professional speakers, virtual seminars, introducing children to acoustics, and remembrance of those who paved the road ahead all allow the ideals of the ASA to flourish. Consider reaching out to a local chapter and becoming a member, joining a meeting, presenting about a career path, or maybe offering a tour of a facility. You can inspire the next generation, make a difference in your local acoustics community, and forge new friendships. For information on the chapters mentioned here, please check out asachapters.org/asa-chapter-locations. If you and your fellow acousticians are interested in starting your own chapter, contact cochairs Sandy Guzman (sjguzman526@gmail.com) or Evelyn Hoglund (hoglund.1@osu.edu).

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Figure 3. Larry and Julia Royster (right and center) with Royster Competition Award winner Lisa Burton O'Toole (left).



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