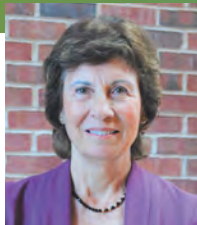


From the President

Maureen Stone



The Past Is Prologue

June 2022 was the 182nd meeting of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) and its 93rd year of existence.

We are approaching our Centenary Celebration in 2029. So, this is a fitting time to look back at the Society's history and think about its future.

In September 1928, Wallace Waterfall began writing colleagues to start a society of Architectural Acousticians.

“Within the last few years there have been a great many developments in the subject of architectural acoustics. Architects, builders, and the public in general are beginning to recognize in the building industry a new engineering science which is approaching a state of development comparable with other engineering sciences... The thought of some organization such as a Society of Acoustical Engineers immediately suggests itself... It is realized that if the society is really to be successful in promoting the interests of Architectural Acoustics and the industry which has developed around this subject, it must be organized on a highly scientific basis and be kept free from reproach in all its activities” (from a letter by Wallace Waterfall, October 10, 1928, to a group of individuals from universities, Bell Telephone Laboratories, Riverbank Laboratories, and the Bureau of Standards).

Waterfall was persuaded to open the Society to other fields, so that by December 1928 a group met to write a constitution and bylaws, which were approved at the first business meeting of the ASA on May 10, 1929. The minutes of this meeting were published in the first issue of *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* (JASA) (asa.scitation.org/toc/jas/1/1) in October 1929 (Figures 1 and 2).

The Society was founded by individuals from universities and employees of companies such as Bell Telephone Laboratories, AT&T, CG Khan music, movie studios, and others, all of whom needed research published that was relevant to them. Full membership in the ASA was limited to those who were doing experimental work on the subject of acoustics. Associate membership was aimed more at companies and those interested in the sales end of the work.

Their motivation for starting this new journal and the Society was the increase in new science in the field of acoustics. These companies needed the ASA, and many of them became sustaining members to support the Society. There was no government funding or intervention in research at that time. Waterfall felt that “the organization...must be on a very high plane...commercialism must be held strictly in the background, or we could not expect the support of those true scientists whose membership is essential to the Society's welfare” (from a letter by Waterfall on September 27, 1928, to Armin Elmen-dorf, consulting engineer for the Celotex Corporation).

However, lack of commercialism did not mean lack of participation by employees of private companies. On the contrary, for many years, membership of the Society was composed of employees of private companies and some universities (see Table 1).

Shortly after the founding of the ASA and the publication of the first issue of JASA, the stock market crashed

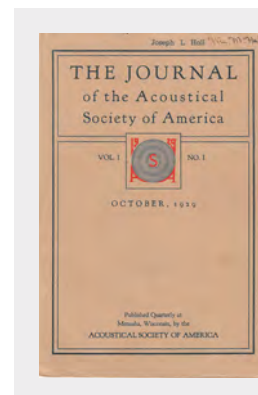


Figure 1. Cover of the first issue of The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (JASA). This issue is free access and can be found at asa.scitation.org/toc/jas/1/1.



Figure 2. Table of Contents of the first issue of JASA.

Table 1. Classification of members of the Acoustical Society of America in 1932 and 2022

Employer Type 1932		Employer Type 2022	
Colleges	16%	College/university	31%
Industrial laboratories (e.g., Bell Telephone, GE)	20%	Industry	12%
Acoustical material companies	23%	Consultant/self-employed	15%
Music and musical instruments	4%	Contractor	2%
Phonographs and talking picture field (RCA, Western Electric, Hollywood studios)	17%	Nonprofit	2%
Radio	6%	Government /government funded	7%
Miscellaneous	15%	Student	13%
		Retired	6%
		Other	1%
		None indicated	10%

on October 10, 1929. Fortunately, Celetex and other companies had given money for the journal just before the crash, which kept the Society out of debt. Two years later, in 1931, the ASA and four other societies began to purchase publishing services as a group that became the American Institute of Physics.

During and after World War II (WWII), vast amounts of new acoustical science topics were developing. At the end of WWII, Wallace Waterfall, who was already working for the US government on WWII assignments, was assigned by the National Defense Research Committee to publish results of that research and discoveries made in the field of sound during the war. Because of all the new information, the Journal went from quarterly and very thin to bimonthly and then to monthly to accommodate this growth.

For more information about the history of the ASA, look at the 25th anniversary program (see tinyurl.com/2p98xd4a), the 75th anniversary program (see tinyurl.com/2p9euktx), and the many oral histories collected by and about prominent ASA members (see asahistory.org/oral-histories).

Looking Toward the Future of the ASA

Times have changed. The majority of our scientific research presentations are funded federally or by other funding agencies. The practical aspects and commercial applications of acoustics are seen more in the exhibitions. But we are again moving toward a greater participation by commercial organizations (see **Table 1**). The uses and

applications of acoustics are practical and many are commercial. We have several strategic plan task forces whose specific aim is to expand the Society's focus more toward practitioners and industry. I now discuss Task Force A and Task Force B and thank Adam Maxwell, chair of Task Force A, and Derek Knight, chair of Task Force B, for their input.

Task Force B: Better Engagement of Practitioners and Industry

Task Force B arose because of the 2019 Strategic Plan Retreat that concluded that practitioners and members from industry are a much higher proportion of the ASA membership than is reflected in the ASA leadership, both historically and today. Task Force B has been working to create programs and deliver experiences for industry and practitioner members that will increase participation, recognition, and leadership of members of these groups. The ASA members from these groups already give scientific presentations on acoustics. Greater involvement could include thematic special sessions reflecting the interests of industry, the increase in the membership of those in private practice and industry, the creation of mechanisms for recruitment of students to private companies, and the increase in corporate visibility through sponsorship.

One of Task Force B's endeavors, sponsored by Tony Hoover and former president Diane Kewley-Port, was to change the review process for electing ASA Fellows to include credentials beyond publications and grant credentials to better represent practitioners among ASA

Fellows. The modifications changed the lens through which candidates are evaluated to better represent the accomplishments of practitioners as well as those of academicians so that there would be a better balance of awardees.

The ASA Academy arose from a desire for professional training for practitioners who may be in other fields or need to broaden their acoustics focus. Michael Vorländer engaged colleagues to develop pilot courses in various technical areas that are currently in the planning phase. The intent is to offer a series of pilot courses in acoustics beginning in early 2023.

Task Force B has also been active in promoting sponsorships for the ASA. They cosponsored the first keynote lecture at the December 2020 Acoustics Virtually Everywhere meeting and suggested speakers from industry. Jim West and Ellington West were our first keynote speakers. Task Force B was also instrumental in providing potential sponsors and contacts in industry for the 2021 Seattle meeting.

Task Force A: Identification and Promotion of Emerging Scientific and Technical Areas

Professional societies always run the risk of losing their impact by remaining the same while their membership and the field change. One of the methods we use to prevent this is the Strategic Plan. Every three-to-four years, a retreat is held to create task forces to address noteworthy issues in the field or in the ASA. Task Forces A and B both emerged from this plan. Task Force A came about to ensure that the Society remains current as science and the field of acoustics grow and change. The goal of Task Force A is to identify emerging scientific and technical areas and create processes that will promote their inclusion in the ASA, to keep the Society relevant, and to promote cross-fertilization between technical areas.

Task Force A, among other things, has created and curated a list of about 15 emerging areas and ASA members who work in these areas as well as points of contact in other societies and journals that target these areas. The list is being used currently to identify speakers for the ASA Webinars. For 2022, about half of the Webinar speakers will be in emerging areas taken from this list. The list is also being used for suggestions for keynote speakers in current and future meetings. Another idea along this line

has been to reinstate the Distinguished Lecture program at the Society meetings with speakers in these areas. Finally, there are ideas to coordinate efforts with future special sessions of ASA meetings and special issues of *JASA* and to connect with relevant individuals in other societies and societies with which we might hold joint conferences.

My Last Column

This is my last column as president, and I want to take the time to say how enjoyable and rewarding this position has been. The other officers, managers, committees, and members are so committed to the future of the Society that it has been a pleasure to work with all of you.

At the close of the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the ASA in 1954, Hallowell Davis said,

“The Acoustical Society of America is in a state of evolution. We don’t know what the form of the Society will be or what the subject matter of the papers and the programs will be at the Hundredth Anniversary Celebration. We wish that we could look into the crystal ball. There is a crystal ball up here [pointing to the movie camera], but it is only half a crystal ball, it’s a one-way affair, posterity is able to look at us, but we can’t look back through that lens and see you on the other side. I wish we could. I know that we would find you as strange and quaint and amusing, in your ways, different from us as you find us as you look at our faces on the screen. However, you are our descendants, you carry on the torch” (from the Anecdotal History of the Program, The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration of the Acoustical Society of America, The Forty-Seventh Meeting. *JASA* 26, 905 [1954]).

As the ASA approaches 100, it is so good to see that the Society and its membership carries on the torch referred to by Davis, and I too look forward to seeing where we go. I am honored to have been part of the process, and I want to encourage other members, and particularly our younger members who are the future of the ASA and of acoustics, in all its realms, to get engaged with the ASA, become part of leadership, and help shape the ASA and acoustics in the years up to the 100th Anniversary Celebration and well beyond.

I thank Elaine Moran, Director of Operations, for her invaluable contributions to this column.