

President's Report FACSS 2010

The 2010 year has seen an unprecedented amount of activity in the Society. Over the past several years, a variety of discussions have taken place on how the Society can increase its benefits to members, and increase its visibility. The principle outlet for communication and access must be the website, and the focus for the year has been making sure that the direction and pace of development are on track to provide the Society a resource that can meet both our short and long term requirements. This appears to now be the case, and I direct you towards Ron Williams report for the details on the progress that we've made this year. I believe that with the coming year, we will be prepared to implement a wide range of initiatives through the website that will directly benefit members, and as well as grow and strengthen the Society.

Other web activities include the on-going development of the LinkedIn group, which continues to expand steadily and currently encompasses about 20% of the total membership. Through the efforts of Bonnie and the national office, the SAS Facebook site has also been launched, and will no doubt prove another valuable asset in allowing access and interconnectivity between members.

The continuing trend for increasing student involvement, especially in the founding of student sections, is extremely positive. Growing the Society from the ground up is the best way to maintain a vigorous membership, and David Heaps along with John-David McEldery has done a great job in welcoming students and making the Society an exciting organization for them to be a part of. Gloria Story and her committee have also continued do outstanding work in supporting the membership, especially in sponsoring the special event at FACSS. Both this event and the student mixer have fostered a great sense of community among the members, and will no doubt help to both bring in new members as well as retain current ones.

The Journal continues to provide valuable content to the membership and academic community under the leadership of Peter Griffiths and Michael Blades. Competition from specialty and on-line journals, erosion of traditional techniques, and the growth of bio-photonics and other non-traditional disciplines have presented special challenges in maintaining the status of the Journal. Mike has taken on the task of addressing these challenges, and has assembled a task-force which will make recommendations on specific ways that the Journal can increase its impact to both the membership and the academic community.

As President, I represented the SAS at the Assembly of Society Officers sponsored by the American Institute of Physics in Washington DC in late March. The meeting brings together the heads of 35 affiliate science societies from around the country to discuss important topical issues. At this meeting, this included the role that scientific societies can play in promoting and defending science at the local level, especially in light of the many non-scientific and non-rational agendas that are influencing educational curricula;

the role of social media to bind scientists together and foster communication regionally and globally; and the opportunities for societies to provide guidance to government especially at the state and local level, where sound scientific input is often lacking and the voice of scientific societies can make a big impact. Probably of most long-term importance and direct impact to the SAS, the Scholarly Publishing Roundtable published its position paper on open access journals. The roundtable was formed under mandate by Congress, and was made up of key stakeholders including academia, librarians, and publishers. This presentation (as well as a summary of other events) can be found at (<http://www.aip.org/aip/assembly/march10/>). The briefest summary would be that while free flow of information is in the public interest, the current system offers important strengths in maintaining the integrity of scientific information, and every effort must be made to retain the most critical features of this system in the face of increasingly rapid progress toward open access.

As a side project, it was my intent (as suggested by my report from FACSS Louisville) to personally and individually poll every member of the Society on what they were looking for in the SAS, and how we could be better serving their needs. This proved to be a large task, and as yet uncompleted, but of the several hundred e-mails I sent out, the results are pretty clear. Apart from replies from people whom I already knew that thought this was a great idea, the response was essentially zero. This isn't wholly unexpected; part of the purpose of the exercise was to increase the visibility of the Society, so low response isn't by any means a failure. People are busy, and I can honestly say that I throw out similar e-mails every day. However, it also highlights that the Society is not high on people's consciousness. Although the Journal is an important benefit to the members, we are currently not central resource for members' spectroscopic needs. I believe that through the website we can begin to offer information, tools, and features that will make the SAS the first resource that people think of when they need any sort of professional guidance. It will be a pleasure to see this come to fruition over the coming years, and I look forward to working with the SAS to make this a growing and flourishing reality.

It has been a great pleasure serving as President of the Society over the past year. I especially thank Bonnie Saylor and the national office for their guidance and tireless efforts in support of the Society. I also offer my best wishes to the incoming president Curt Marcott, and know that his leadership will help ensure the growth and prosperity of the Society.

Fred LaPlant