



So What's the Plan?

Once in a while, for every organization and individual, the question arises, "So what's the plan?" In order to answer this question, we first need to determine what is really important to us — ECS members and prospective members — and what can realistically be expected. I believe that three items are of prime importance to our membership: technical publications, semi-annual meetings, and Local Section meetings. Other benefits, such as career development and the tools required for that, are also of importance. Playing an advocacy role in government policies is being fulfilled through our participation in the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Federation of Materials Societies. Credit cards and life insurance, while of value, are often better obtained through much larger professional organizations and are likely not to be a driving force in selecting membership in a professional organization such as the ECS. So, let's concentrate on our three prime areas. The **Journal** is a first-rate publication and is well respected; the ECS can take pride in it. The lag-time, from date of submission to date of publication, is eight to nine months on average. The editorial board is tough and reasonable at the same time, resulting in a well-balanced acceptance rate.

The **Journal** has grown in the number of pages and number of papers, to the extent that a further increase would result in a much higher postage rate or a 13th issue in a 12-month period. In 1999, the **Journal** will be published electronically in addition to paper. This will result in a shorter lag-time and in its availability to ECS overseas members at the same time as North American members. The success of the Letters section in the front of the **Journal** is such that it has been split off from the **Journal** into a separate journal, *Electrochemical and Solid-State Letters*. Starting in June, the electronic edition of *Letters* will be available to all members and the lag-time will be a short eight to ten weeks for electronic publication, with paper available another two to four weeks later. *Letters* will also be made available to members of the Electron Devices Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers; this will enhance the audience and is expected to increase the submission of papers, especially on the "dry" side of the house.

Judging from the number of papers and attendees, the semi-annual meetings are a successful part of the Society's program. They are important because the meetings are a means of interaction with our colleagues, for networking and the exchange of ideas. The Society and the meetings have become more international over the years, including joint meetings with our Japanese sister societies and with the International Society of Electrochemistry. If we examine the ratio of attendees to the number of papers, we reach numbers of about 1.54:1. In my view, that is too low and it means that the great majority of attendees come to a meeting first to give a paper, and second to listen to papers. One may argue that many organizations only allow their staff to attend scientific meetings if a paper is presented; however, there are examples of conferences where the attendees to papers ratio exceeds 3:1. To me, this ratio is related to the perceived quality of the papers. We need to find ways to continually improve this quality, thereby increasing the mentioned ratio, while maintaining the number of papers. I plan to bring some focus to this issue, investigate the causes, and to come up with practical recommendations.

Members who are unable to attend the semi-annual meetings often attend our Local Section meetings. With their technical presentations and social character, they are an effective method of communication among members. However, attendance is rather small, ranging from 5-30 participants. We need to find ways to strengthen these meetings as well.

How do we go about recommending changes and improvements? It is a job that should involve all, not just a small and limited number of members. The ECS has many Society committees and Division/Group committees that guarantee broad participation and opinion forming. This broad participation is often more important than speed, because it ensures that decisions are carried by many members. (The Society has in place established procedures if quick decisions are required.) Too many times we rely on the same people to fill the committee slots where broader participation from our membership would benefit us all. Being a committee member does not mean that one has to attend every meeting; it does mean being involved, having your opinion count, and

“ ... three items are of prime importance to our membership: technical publications, semi-annual meetings, and Local Section meetings ”

making a difference for ECS and you. Rather than identifying barriers for not being active, we all need to find ways to be more involved, to step forward and become part of the plan.

Have a great summer, and I hope you'll take some time to make the Society a part of your professional plans.

Gerard Blom
President
The Electrochemical Society, Inc.