



Change

Benjamin Franklin said that only two things in this world are certain: death and taxes. While both seem pretty certain to me, I'd add a third: change. You may not know what the future is going to be like, but you can bet that it will be different from the past and the present in important and often unpredictable ways.

Change poses a challenge, because it requires us to adapt. Organizations that can't or won't adapt to changes in the world around them won't prosper, and some won't survive. As one aphorism puts it bluntly, "Change, or die." Not everyone is comfortable with change, however. There's another saying you hear all the time: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That's sound advice sometimes, but it's important to remember that what works today may not work nearly so well tomorrow, and the best time to make changes is before crises arise from benign neglect.

Beneath the Society's orderly exterior, change goes on all the time. Changes occur for a variety of reasons. New technologies often enable advances such as our excellent Web page and our electronic submission of meeting abstracts. The commitment to better member service also brings positive changes; the magazine you're reading right now is an example. The internationalization of science in general and of our membership have led to ECS meetings outside of North America with other societies as co-sponsors. A series of ad hoc long-range planning committees has led to significant improvements in our scientific publications and our meetings in recent years. The most recent big change was the Society's purchase of a 3 1/2-acre, 4-building site that will provide us with better headquarters space and ongoing rental income.

More change lies ahead. Among those that directly impact ECS, I believe that information technologies will continue to explode. That's both good news and a great challenge for us. I expect that the shift from paper to electronic media will gather force and that the current practices of scientific publication and peer review will be significantly redefined as a result. ECS and other publishers confront important financial issues as this transition occurs, and we are working to antici-

pate and understand those issues. I expect that the content and format of our meetings will also continue to evolve to reflect the needs and the interests of attendees.

Changes I would like to see include more coordination and collaboration among scientific societies, including more sharing of best practices and perhaps even resources where

we face similar issues. Another might be cross-memberships at reduced rates. A third might be better collective efforts to represent the scientific community to science policy makers, those who formulate research budgets, the educational community, and the public at large.

Most of us think that we're pretty comfortable with change; it's the other guy who has trouble adapting. That assumption may be tested when we face the difficult and long-standing issue of our Society's name. We all know that the name has a long and proud tradition, just as we know that it falls short in describing what the Society does and whom it represents. This subject has come up many times and was discussed at length at the Society's most recent Meeting in Seattle. Our current long-range planning committee is

studying the matter very thoroughly and will make recommendations at the Honolulu meeting in October.

The issue of a representative identity for the Society is a tough and important one that affects us all. I want you to know that it is being considered very thoughtfully. Be assured that, as always, your opinion counts. Please watch for further news on this subject and relay your comments to your Division leadership.

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Dale E. Hall
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