



## Taking Stock

In the aftermath of Paris, the 192nd ECS Meeting, it was great fun to read in *Interface* Dennis Turner's account of the 52nd ECS Meeting, the Northwestern Train Trip in 1927—a leisurely 16-day train tour from Chicago to Vancouver, and return, compared to the intensity of 2,463 papers and posters compressed into five days in Paris! Technical sessions interspersed with dinner dances and mine tours in the Northwest US and Canada of 1927 have perhaps only a faint echo 70 years later. Present meetings are dominated by the density of scientific business, as attractive as Paris and our other meeting sites might be. Overall, this high level of activity, combined with the pace of change within the Society in response to the rapid advances in communications and publications, has put deadline stresses on the membership involved and the Society staff in achieving the tight time-lines and ambitious goals we have for journals and for increasing meeting efficiency. The size of this enterprise is now markedly greater than what could have been contemplated in 1927 when the non-stop Atlantic flight was that of Lindbergh.

This column is no paean to nostalgia nor a questioning of course — I personally can plead as “guilty” as any to supporting recent developments in the Society's meetings and publications. The resultant flux of activity, however, does require more than an occasional look as to its net benefit to members and their perception of its value. Member benefits is one of the three areas the Long Range Planning Committee is currently studying and to us a somewhat thorny issue in our periodic member surveys of Society performance. Benefits tend to be translated in terms of the offerings of large societies: credit cards, insurance, travel opportunities, and other such items which ideally have either economies of scale or special gimmicks to offer. The absence of these tends to depress our score in this area as opposed to the much more positive response where meetings and publications are concerned. While we could and should always seek to provide more aggressively for the professional needs of our members (and are seeking ways to do this consonant with our international clientele and compatible with our size and purpose), we are unlikely, at a size of about 7,200 currently, to move into the broadside classical “benefits.”

Rather, our efforts have traditionally focussed on providing the most effective meetings and publications and measuring “value” in the success of this aim. If “value” implies a financial component, we can cite that dues in 1998 are the same as those in 1994 (and then were just a \$5 increment from 1993). This during a period when *Interface* came into flower to become the significant asset of the present, and the *Journal* was growing in content and submission rates to the state of spinning off a new *Letters* journal next year. We are able, under the same dues structure, to offer this new journal in its electronic version as a member benefit through its initial period. The Society's success in recent years (careful economies of production in publications areas and consistently growing meeting attendance) have allowed us to reinvest funds into these vital growth enterprises. Excellent management in Pennington and carefully conceived Board directives have allowed us to accommodate these new initiatives

through the necessary expansion and professional growth of the Pennington staff to have the computer and editorial expertise at hand. As a result, we have the financial base to attempt such improvements and move into the new challenges.

During this expansion of our publications, the move to more international presence, and the approach of our centennial celebration in 2002, events have moved faster than our capability to obtain wide feedback from our members. *Interface* is certainly one platform to express your views and input; e-mail is carefully read. We encourage all members to assess our progress and make suggestions that Society committees can consider. It is very difficult to imagine where and what the Society

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Meeting will be in another 70 years! Let's hope for then it will also be with satisfaction of a prior period of Society responsiveness, growth, and excellence.

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