



Taking the Long View in a Time of Great Uncertainty

Making Sausage — A View into Creating the Annual Meeting Technical Program

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Three years ago I attended the Technical Program Committee (TPC) meeting for the first time. The TPC is usually held the day prior to the March Executive Committee meeting each year to make it easier for those attending both gatherings to participate. The TPC meeting brings together more than fifty experts from the Institute's Technical Divisions to construct the complex agenda for the Annual Meeting. In 2012 the meeting location was Orlando, Florida, USA, and there was a sadness that hung over the participants as they reflected upon the perennial leader of the activity, Charlie Pietri, who had passed away just the month before in February.¹ Steve Mladineo, pictured here, volunteered that year to lead the effort, as many others "chipped in" to make sure it was a success, including long-standing participants Paul Ebel and Teressa McKinney, who is now the TPC Chair.



of how the TPC process worked. Many described it as "making sausage," so it was intriguing to think that I could get a glimpse into the inner workings of the Institute. Little did I know that this annual event would become addictive, and one that I have participated in ever since. Not only do I get to preview the Annual Meeting and network with the leadership and "movers and shakers" of the Institute, but also the meeting provides insight into critical strategic issues and topical areas of interest for our membership.

That year I had diligently downloaded, printed, and organized more than 500 abstracts that had been submitted for consideration into a three-ring binder, and sorted them under Technical Division Tabs (the photo shows this year's binder).



I started reading the abstracts the weekend before the meeting, and continued on the flight to Orlando, as I ran into other participants coming in from across the country, also diligently reading abstracts on the airplane, and putting colored sticky tabs on groupings of papers that could potentially align to be a technical session. I had no idea what I was in store for the next day — I was supposed to be an "observer" but was called in to help organize the new education and training sessions. It was a trial by fire.

Preparing for the Technical Program Committee Meeting

As the new chair of the INMM Strategic Planning Committee in 2012, I felt a need to have a better understanding

Technical Division Discussions and the Art of Horse-Trading

The six technical division chairs and the chair of the Education and Training Committee have a table in the meeting room, and at 7:30 a.m. folks begin to gather and talk about the abstracts that have been pre-identified for this year's sessions — and in some cases, they immediately start the process of horse-trading with other divisions for abstracts they believe would be of benefit in one of their sessions or more appropriate for a particular technical track they are creating. Even with multiple discussions occurring simultaneously, there is a certain synergy

This column is intended to serve as a forum to present and discuss current strategic issues impacting the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management in the furtherance of its mission. The views expressed by the author are not necessarily endorsed by the Institute, but are intended to stimulate and encourage JNMM readers to actively participate in strategic discussions. Please provide your thoughts and ideas to the Institute's leadership on these and other issues of importance. With your feedback we hope to create an environment of open dialogue, addressing the critical uncertainties that lie ahead for the world, and identify the possible paths to the future based on those uncertainties that can be influenced by the Institute. Jack Jekowski can be contacted at jjekowski@aol.com.



that is created among the groups, and by mid-morning flip charts begin to be populated and put up on every available inch of wall space in the room. It is not uncommon for other discussions to occur about special sessions, plenary speakers, and logistics for the meeting at the same time, including the size and availability of presentation rooms at the Annual Meeting hotel, and other activities that might need to be scheduled for the meeting. If you pay attention you can pick up a lot of interesting information. Throughout all of this, the INMM headquarters staff also assists and handles issues as they arise. For a short video of this year's morning session to get a sense for the activity, see http://youtu.be/UA44OsRr_II.

Roll Call, Orphans, and Dupes

As the morning rolls into lunch time, the TPC chair checks with each group to see if they are ready for the first roll call. The groups by now have populated flip charts of abstract numbers and hopefully have been able to capture every abstract they are responsible for (including the ones that have been traded) into technical session groupings. If they all agree, we are ready for the first roll call; if not we adjourn for lunch and take a new pass

at the compilation after lunch. This year, partly because a new process was instituted to handle "orphans" (abstracts no one claimed) and duplicates (abstracts more than one group claimed — otherwise known as "dupes"). The first roll call did not happen until after lunch. The flip chart shown is from 2012 and shows how many orphans and dupes were discovered after the first roll call. This year, INMM staff used an automated system to cross-check for orphans and dupes prior to the first roll call. It was hoped that by doing this the first roll call would be (almost) perfect. The picture of Corey Hinderstein on the floor shows the anomalies the automated system identified that were corrected prior to the first roll call vote this year. Some in the audience found it hard to believe such a system would work well, and several others connived to yell out "got it" when the first abstract number was called as a joke (proving that even technical nerds have a sense of humor). It created a great laugh, but then we settled in with the first roll call of abstracts, and remarkably, only two or three anomalies were found through the

Orphans	Dupes
101	101
102	102
103	103
104	104
105	105
106	106
107	107
108	108
109	109
110	110
111	111
112	112
113	113
114	114
115	115
116	116
117	117
118	118
119	119
120	120
121	121
122	122
123	123
124	124
125	125
126	126
127	127
128	128
129	129
130	130
131	131
132	132
133	133
134	134
135	135
136	136
137	137
138	138
139	139
140	140
141	141
142	142
143	143
144	144
145	145
146	146
147	147
148	148
149	149
150	150
151	151
152	152
153	153
154	154
155	155
156	156
157	157
158	158
159	159
160	160
161	161
162	162
163	163
164	164
165	165
166	166
167	167
168	168
169	169
170	170
171	171
172	172
173	173
174	174
175	175
176	176
177	177
178	178
179	179
180	180
181	181
182	182
183	183
184	184
185	185
186	186
187	187
188	188
189	189
190	190
191	191
192	192
193	193
194	194
195	195
196	196
197	197
198	198
199	199
200	200



400+ abstracts. Two video clips of the afternoon session, including the call out by several people of "Got it" when the first abstract number was called, can be found at <http://youtu.be/ajHC3Az7rbl> and <http://youtu.be/39Wa6O4r5zw>. This was the first year most folks could remember that the alignment was accomplished on the first roll call!

Some Unexpected Side Benefits

In 2012, the participants were treated to a special presentation by Paul Ebel on his efforts over the years to help speakers and session chairs improve their presentation and session management respectively. Each year at the annual meeting, Ebel helps to orchestrate the technical sessions and provide guidance and support to the presenters. He has also done an online webcast for student chapter members to help them as they begin their journey in the field of nuclear materials management. Oh, and to reward all of the participants, once a good roll call vote has been completed in the late afternoon, an ice cream cart is rolled in and everyone gets to have a sugar boost to get them through the final phase of the meeting — identifying session chairs, room size, and scheduling. The final details are then collected on the flip charts by headquarters staff and the TPC chair and used to put the complete program together. It is not uncommon when that



process occurs for further discussions to take place to make sure the final Technical Program comes together seamlessly. A special computer program is used to complete that phase of the Program creation.

Capturing the Environment

It is hard to describe in words, or even pictures and videos the remarkable experience of a TPC meeting. It is an important part of the overall mission of the Institute and one that participants take very seriously, and put an extraordinary effort into to make sure the attendees of the

INMM Annual Meeting have a rewarding and value-added experience. If you see anyone who participates in the TPC at the Annual Meeting, including our headquarters staff, be sure to thank them for their service and talk to them about the possibility of helping in the future — you will find it a very rewarding experience!

The Final Takeaway

The health of the Institute has never been better. The quality, diversity, and technical depth of the abstracts submitted for this year's Annual Meeting in Indian Wells, California, USA, are nothing

short of amazing, with more students and international presenters than ever providing a strong and diverse technical program.

Reference

1. See the *Journal of Nuclear Materials Management*, 2012, Vol. 40, No. 3, for a Memoriam by Yvonne Ferris, and other remembrances of Charlie's long contributions to the Institute.

