Get Involved: Shijie Wang Discusses the Work of a JOM Advisor

Kelly Zappas

"Get Involved" is a recurring End Notes feature that spotlights the work of TMS volunteers and shows the wide range of activities available through TMS. This month, Shijie Wang, senior engineer at Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation and a technical advisor to JOM from the Hydrometallurgy and Electrometallurgy Committee, discusses the challenges and opportunities that come with serving as a JOM advisor.

Q. What was your first volunteer role with TMS?

A. I began attending TMS meetings in 1991 as a graduate student. At that first meeting, I wrote and presented a paper that later became published in the conference proceedings. My first volunteer experience was being a student monitor, which was a very interesting job. Not only was I able to attend additional conferences and go out to dinner with professors, but also found the role to be highly relevant to my family background because my father had been an expert in mining design.

Q. How, and when, did you become a JOM advisor?

A. I have been the JOM advisor for the Hydrometallurgy and Electrometallurgy Committee for three years. I was a member of the committee, so I got involved in JOM through a committee meeting. We were discussing who would serve as the JOM advisor because the original candidate wasn't available. They asked, "Who can do this?" And I volunteered. Next year, I'll be the chair of the Hydrometallurgy and Electrometallurgy Committee, so we might need to find someone new to be JOM's advisor.

Q. What kind of work is involved in serving as a JOM advisor?

A. A lot of work is involved. In the beginning, the technical committee chooses the subject for the issue. You have to define the subject first. After that, you have to, through your relationships, search for authors to contribute papers.

Sometimes it's difficult—for example, when you ask the president of a company to submit a paper. You might ask for two years and never get it. Sometimes the authors are too busy or the company information is too sensitive to print in the journal. So it's not easy to get papers. That's why you have to go through your networks.

Then, once you have the papers, you have to use your judgment, your experience, and your knowledge to go through the paper and decide if it's good for the magazine, in terms of useful information and relevance for JOM readers. Sometimes English is not a first language for the authors, so you have to make changes. Sometimes you look at a paper that has been submitted and, using your knowledge and experience, you have a question about it. Then you have to ask the author about it. After that, you have a lot of help from the editors at JOM, who make the papers look great.

Finally, you have to write a commentary that gives some background on why your committee chose the subject.

Q. How much time do you commit to your activities as a JOM advisor?

To become an advisor for JOM, contact the chair of the TMS technical committee that matches your area of interest. A list of TMS technical committees is available on the Committee Home Pages section of members.tms.org/admin.html. If you know of a TMS member who should be featured in a "Get Involved" column, contact Kelly Zappas at kzappas@tms.org.

Is it difficult to balance your work and your volunteer responsibilities?

A. Normally, I don't use my working time. I spend a lot of my spare time—like sleeping time or coffee time or movie time—on JOM. At the beginning of the process, you study the work. Then you have about two to three months to relax before the papers come in. For me, this month (August) is busy because my topic will appear in the November issue of JOM, so everything is due September 1. This month, I'll focus on paper corrections and writing my commentary.

Q. How has volunteering with TMS helped you professionally?

A. It has helped me a lot. As a student I was able to learn from TMS, from its presentations and JOM. Now, I'm able to pass that knowledge along to others—to students or young graduates who just started working with me. I see TMS as an asset for queries as well as a forum for literary review. It's a superb organization, where learning flows in numerous directions.

Q. What advice would you give to potential TMS volunteers?

A. Many people related to the field, from students to CEOs, read the publications. That is why you have to put the time and dedication in. After a while enthusiasm translates into enjoyment. I'd say you might even end up loving it.

Kelly Zappas is a contributing writer for TMS.