Get Involved: Robert E. Hackenberg, Technical Committee Chair

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"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, Robert E. Hackenberg, R&D scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory and chair of the TMS Phase Transformations Committee, discusses his role as a TMS technical committee chair.

Q. What was your first volunteer role with TMS? How did you get involved?

A. Early in my career, I was asked to be a symposium session chair at several TMS Annual Meetings. I learned that this was a good opportunity to network, especially at Authors' Coffee, which helped me put names to faces.

Q. How did you become involved in the Phase Transformations Committee (PTC)? Did you have to work your way up to serving as committee chair?

A. My mentor invited me to join the PTC just after I started my postdoctoral work at Los Alamos National Laboratory in 2001. I was aware of the PTC since its members had organized and published several key symposia that I had gotten to know while doing literature searches in graduate school. In fact, I presented and published my first major paper at a PTC-sponsored symposium. Once on the PTC, I served as the lead organizer for a symposium held in 2004. Since conference programming is the major activity of the PTC, this experience helped lead to my election as vice-chair (2006) and then chair (2008).

Q. What kind of work is involved in chairing a TMS technical committee?

A. The organizational work involves preparing for and chairing the twice-yearly PTC meetings, and periodical-

ly reminding people of action items, deadlines, new opportunities, etc. The technical aspect involves working with committee members to nucleate and grow new ideas (for symposia, etc.) and see them through to maturation. As the chair, you are always on the lookout to make connections and realize synergies between different ideas, technical committees, communities of interest, etc. Bringing in new committee members and helping them flourish has been one of the most rewarding aspects of this leadership role.

Q. How much time do you commit to your activities as a committee chair? Is it difficult to balance your work and your volunteer responsibilities?

A. The total effort required is not large, but it is needed in short, concentrated spurts right before and after our meetings. My two years spent as vice-chair gave me a good feel for the yearly rhythm of committee activity, so once I became chair I did not have much of a problem balancing my daily work and

these volunteer responsibilities.

Q. Do you do any other volunteer work with TMS?

A. I am a Key Reader for *Metallurgical and Materials Transactions A*. This is a rewarding activity that helps me keep informed of developments in the field.

Q. How has volunteering with TMS helped you professionally?

A. Being in the thick of things as PTC chair has helped me stay abreast of the latest advances in my own specialty, phase transformations. My exposure to a wider range of technical ideas and a broader community of scientists has had positive impacts for my job and longer-term career goals.

Q. What advice would you give to a new TMS member who was hoping to become more involved in society activities?

A. You should identify a TMS committee that interests you. One shortcut is to find the sponsoring committee for symposia that have particularly interested you; this is usually listed in the conference program. Or go to the committee homepages on the TMS website; if you log in as a TMS member, you can view the roster, view past meeting minutes, and contact the committee chair.

Kelly Zappas is a contributing writer for TMS.

If you want to get involved with a TMS technical committee, visit members.tms.org/admin.html and click on the "Committee Home Pages" link to find the TMS technical committee that best suits your interests. Log in to the site for information on how to contact committee members and inquire about upcoming events and activities. If you know of a TMS member who should be featured in a future "Get Involved" column, contact Kelly Zappas at kzappas@tms.org.