

“Never miss a chance to shut up.”

— Will Rogers

This issue of *JOM* is full of coverage from the TMS 2011 Annual Meeting, which convened in late February/early March in San Diego, California—one of my favorite cities in the United States and one for which I often, but unsuccessfully, lobby for TMS to open a west-coast branch office that I could staff. In the meeting recap a few pages hence, you’ll even find a picture of jolly ole me at the new volunteer concierge booth. I quite enjoyed spending my open time at this booth as it was a great chance to not only tell attendees about TMS volunteerism opportunities, but it also gave me the opportunity to chat anew with many of my friends and acquaintances in the membership. I will admit that I never cease to be amazed by how many of the people tell me how much they like this column. I don’t deserve it (really), but it is just a sufficient amount of annual encouragement to keep writing for another year.

While I enjoy writing *IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS* each month, I aspire also toward the wisdom of knowing when to be quiet and let others do the talking. I’m not always successful, but I’m trying. Case in point—my plan for this editorial was to write about all of the things that I thought went right with the Annual Meeting. It was big success in terms of number of presentations and number of attendees. But then I thought, who cares what I think of the Annual Meeting? More importantly, what do others think? How can we improve? Toward that end, we survey professional attendees, students, exhibitors, and staff: What went well? What didn’t? Etc. We learn lots of quantitative and trackable stuff this way. The programming was rated “about as expected.” There was a general shift in overall results to “better than expected” from 2008 to 2011. My favorite part of any survey, however, is the comments section. Sure, the comments are strictly qualitative and based on a single person’s opinion, but you can learn a lot by sifting through these observations and identifying common themes.

So, I sifted, and here are some resulting questions that I’ll be asking the staff Annual Meeting Team in the coming weeks:

- Can we do a better job with the navigation, wield-iness, and accessibility of the print and electronic program?
- Can we muster better and more frequent food and beverage functions, including better food at high-price social functions?
- Can we work with the volunteers to devise better logistical groupings of technical content in the session rooms to reduce travel times between rooms?
- Can we improve the poster session format and associated receptions to promote attendance and networking?
- Can we create more social activities for networking?
- How can we maximize the amount of podium opportunities to assure that a speaker’s time is not too limited?
- Can we do more to reduce no-show speakers and keep speakers on time?
- What do we have to do to make sure that registration materials don’t run out before the meeting ends?
- How can we reduce expenses for attendees?

While I distilled many comments to compile these opportunities for improvement, I also found many comments in harmony with the following statement: “I thought TMS 2011 was great and I look forward to Orlando next year!” That’s great, but there is never time to rest on laurels. I’ve no doubt that staff and volunteers alike will do their best to make 2012 even better.



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