

in the final analysis

“In a short time, this will be a long time ago.”

—Observation in the movie *Slow West*

Having spent much of my professional career in the employ of TMS, I frequently marvel at how the annual cycles of membership, meetings, publications, and myriad other activities seem to turn faster with each passing year. It seems like only yesterday that we returned from San Antonio for TMS2019, yet in just a few weeks we leave for TMS2020 in San Diego. Time is not constant in TMS terms.

Time has been much on my family’s mind in recent weeks as we have been going through the household storeroom, separating what-used-to-be wheat from what-is-now chaff as transmuted over decades of entombment. Among the abandoned treasures that once seemed so important to preserve: Books that I have not opened in more than 40 years—they have been either boxed (and boxed and boxed) and donated or stored more lovingly on new shelves in my office; at least a tonne of homemade VHS recordings of my favorite movies that have been replaced and re-replaced in turn by commercial videotapes, laser discs, DVDs, Blu-Rays, and, ultimately, I hope, streaming services—they were sent to their final rewind in the trash; generations of paper records and documents—these were parsed and piled for many coming weekends of lengthy shredding sessions. It was an interesting mix of dull drudgery and dusty nostalgia.

Among the more interesting artifacts unearthed during the household archeology was a paper with rusty staples from my graduate school days almost 30 years ago. My master’s degree is in corporate communication from Pittsburgh’s Duquesne University, and I earned it over two years while attending night school, having a full-time day job with TMS to otherwise keep me busy. While I rarely slept, I was savvy to certain opportunities to serve all masters concurrently. For example, I focused my school work whenever practical on projects that might be applicable to TMS—it was one of my ways to give back. My re-found paper was dated March 1991 (pre-Internet days) and comprised a proposal for TMS to employ hypertext and telnet (a telephone network) to create a service called TMS OnLine. To quote:

“The service would be fee-free to the user-members and nonmembers alike. TMS Online could be operational within eight months after approval of the concept and funding. In addition to being a member service, TMS Online should increase meeting registration and publication sales. It will also be a useful information/customer service tool for the headquarters staff, and it will be invaluable in the development of specialized marketing lists. If successful, the service could be expanded in other ways that would offer greater member service, directly generate income, and enhance society prestige as a leader in the field of association management for materials science and engineering.”

I subsequently submitted the class paper to staff leadership, and two years later it was up and running within TMS. It was a text-only interface and quite primitive by today’s standards. We had a phone number rather than a URL or domain name. Still, you could get Society news, publication abstracts, and meeting information with searchability and immediacy. It is all described in my October 1993 *JOM* article, “Introducing TMS OnLine: An Interactive Electronic Gateway to Information Dissemination” (SpringerLink). It felt profoundly new and portended to us that member service would never be the same. It wasn’t. Less than two years later, TMS OnLine would migrate from the telnet platform to the new Worldwide Web protocol, and we’ve been in the mode of continuous improvement ever since.

Many talented and committed people—volunteers and staff—have worked on every aspect of the Society’s virtualization over all of these years, and I’m delighted to see their efforts succinctly recognized at next month’s TMS2020 with the issuance of a commemorative pin to all attendees. It simply recognizes the 25th anniversary of www.tms.org. In associations and otherwise, corporate communication has never been the same, and it has never been better.

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James J. Robinson
Executive Director

 @JJRofTMS

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This commemorative pin celebrating 25 years of www.tms.org will be available to all attendees at the TMS 2020 Annual Meeting & Exhibition (TMS2020) in February.