

in the final analysis

“Organization of the new TMS Technical Divisions is progressing extremely well, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the technical division chairpersons (TDCs) and the TMS staff. I met with them on 23 March to outline the concept, purposes, and responsibilities of the technical divisions and to develop a timetable of activities that will lead to the first formal meeting of the divisions at the 1989 Annual Meeting in Las Vegas.”

—1988 TMS President Frank V. Nolfi Jr.

The mid-1980s were a period of transition within TMS. My general hubris would like me to point out that I joined TMS in 1984, but my grounding diffidence will point to genuine game changers like the Society separately incorporating as an organization independent of its founder, AIME (the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineering); the name change from The Metallurgical Society to The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society; the expansion of the annual meeting to include an exhibition; the renaming of *Journal of Metals* as *JOM*; and, most importantly, the establishment of the Society’s modern technical division structure. As you’ve been reading in this year’s excellent series of divisional history articles by Magazine Managing Editor Kaitlin Calva, the development of the divisions has had significant and lasting impact on TMS. I don’t think it too bold to posit that the technical divisions are the defining heartbeat of the Society.

The work to establish the divisions began in earnest with Board of Directors discussions in 1987, TMS members voting on a modification to the Society’s Bylaws to incorporate the divisions in 1988, and the convening of face-to-face council meetings at TMS1989. The divisional structure as originally debuted looked very much as it does now. There were (and are) five divisions: Extraction & Processing Division; Light Metals Division; Materials Design & Manufacturing Division (now Materials Processing & Manufacturing Division); Structural Materials Division; and Electronic, Magnetic & Photonic Materials Division (now Functional Materials Division).^{*} While the division structure has been relatively constant, there has been much fluidity in the organization of the technical committees within the divisions. We didn’t stand up technical committees on additive manufacturing, biomaterials, or integrated computational materials engineering by eschewing innovation and progress.

Lesson: Times change, technologies change, and technical committees change. Question: Should the technical divisions themselves engage in more change as well? Answer: Maybe.

Venerable is a good thing, rigidity not so much. Knowing this, the Technical Division Council (i.e., the chairs of the technical divisions) are asking whether we should undertake modifications or improvements to the current divisional structure and what form those improvements might take. This is being done by commissioning an ad hoc committee to execute a specific charge:

This committee will consider the question of whether the current TMS Technical Division structure remains adequate to position TMS to address the needs and opportunities associated with the rapid evolution that is occurring within the materials technologies that already call TMS “home” and that could call TMS “home.”

The committee report should contain recommendations built around the questions: (1) At an operational level, is the current TMS Technical Division scope and structure adequate to responsively position TMS to address the needs and opportunities associated with the current domains/interests of the technical divisions as well as emergent science and technology? (2) At the applied level, how can the response to Question 1 be used to assure that TMS is recognized as the “home of the materials aspects” of emergent technologies that already have some presence within the technical divisions? (3) At the strategic level, how can the response to Question 1 be used to make TMS an appealing and nurturing destination for materials science and technologies that have no or only a nominal presence within TMS?

What will be the recommendations and how will they be handled? Will the divisions adopt big changes, little changes, or no changes at all? The answers will surely shape the prospects and practices of TMS for decades to come.

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* **Trivia:** The Board of Director’s original wish was to have the divisions listed in this order to reflect a notional journey from upstream to down. That stylistic construct never caught on as everyone quickly defaulted to the easier rigor of alphabetical order.