

The AMS's Continuing Role in Promoting Communications and Setting Standards

A principal *raison d'être* of the Society is to provide conduits of communication among its members. This most usually takes the form of publications, conferences, and workshops.

And in the process of facilitating communications by such means, the Society, perforce, has established standards of excellence on several planes. By appointing journal editors of high quality and by setting a refereeing process for acceptance of contributions, we ensure a threshold of quality in our publications. Similarly, in organizing conferences, by naming competent program committees we hope to ensure bounds on acceptable papers.

Not all standard setting functions of our Society stem directly from a communications root. For example, the admissions process for membership of various kinds is designed to define *minimum* qualifications of education and experience corresponding to each level. At the other end of the spectrum, special distinctions, such as Fellow status and Honorary membership, and the array of Society awards, are designed to signify peer recognition of high excellence.

All in all the Society has been more than reasonably successful in creating and administering its program to define, protect and elevate the standards of excellence of its membership, as well as the quality of scientific and professional communication among those members.

What I described as the situation in the American Meteorological Society is also generally the case in most all other scholarly and professional societies. And we all find that from time to time the system of communications and standards, and sometimes even its aspirations, need to be re-examined in light of evolving conditions. It is a continuing process and I would like to recall several examples drawn from my own experience on the Executive Committee these past two years.

Over the past decade the Society has initiated several new journals to meet new or expanded needs. In retrospect, it sometimes appears that this may have been overdone. In some instances there seems to be overlapping and competition for the same disciplinary "territory," with possible confusion to both contributors and subscribers. There is also concern by some that a chronic over-capacity might result in lowered standards of acceptance. The question of a well-balanced suite of journals is currently under study.

In the most recent case of a new journal, there seems to be little question of justified need. In a move to more substantially bridge the gap between the operational forecasting community and other constituencies within the Society, a new medium has been established—*Weather and Forecasting*. This is but one of several moves needed to facilitate the flow of information, ideas and opinions between and among forecasters in government operations, the private sector and the broadcast media, and scientists at universities and research laboratories.

Along these same lines, there is a growing need for providing continuing education for service practitioners, both public and private, in the face of rapid advances in our science and technology. As a first step, an assessment is being initiated of the profession's needs, and the Society will then work with the university community to develop a long-term *modus*.

One should note that the need for communication does not stop at the boundaries of the Society. As the collective voice and conscience of the profession and the science, the Society often needs to speak out in behalf of, or to, its membership. This can take the form of a formal statement to define and declare the Society's opinion on one of several types of issues: assessing the scientific or technological state of the art, or comments on weather-related hazards, or urging action on policy matters of concern to the science or the profession, or calling attention to urgent scientific or professional matters. Such Statements of the Society have been a long tradition and will continue to provide the major outlet for information and viewpoint. The procedures have recently been consolidated and recodified to facilitate the action and review process.

Another type of statement might be to clarify professional standards, such as explaining the significance of the Society's weathercaster Seal of Approval to the broadcast industry and to the public. This might take the form of a letter or a promotional preparation.

On the subject of evolving standards, most notable is the recent deletion of experience as the only qualification for election to the grade of Member of the Society.

Our use of the rank of Fellow to acknowledge outstanding contributions over a substantial number of years has sometimes proven uneven. In a change of procedures, the selection process will be more dynamic and systematic in the future, with emphasis being placed on a more-uniform recognition of the performance of all constituencies of the Society.

Honorary Membership is being revitalized to provide a delineation of accumulated distinction comparable to or exceeding that demanded by the Society's highest awards.

The Francis W. Reichelderfer Award has been created to note distinguished public service by personnel in the weather services. There now will be three awards for distinction in operational meteorology.

Many of these recent improvements were the result of initiatives from within the Executive Committee, the Council, or the Committees of your Society. However, it is necessary that the membership itself make its views known so that developing problems and needs can be identified, examined and acted upon.

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