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The Value of Membership in the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing

Introduction

We have asked a number of members of the ASPRS to tell us what they see as the value proposition for ASPRS membership. Simply stated, our colleagues believe that ASPRS membership is a “vital resource” at every stage of one’s career. As one contact told us, the ASPRS provides a “robust platform for networking that seamlessly spans academia, industry and government...fostering connections with like-minded individuals.” The value in professional growth comes from these contacts, mentoring, and ready access to technical information, workshops, and conferences. That is not to say that social media are not useful but, in general, the ASPRS provides deeper, broader, and more personal interactions and hence more valuable contacts, information, and connections. But the true value is seen in the numerous outcomes that result from membership in the ASPRS. It is important to note that these outcomes tend to be additive – they build over time as one travels through the different and unique stepping stones of their geospatial careers.

Student

Like many, two of the authors of this column were interested in the use of remote sensing and mapping tools to gather information – in one case forestry and in the other agriculture. The ASPRS is a natural home for those students who have begun to explore the usefulness in their home fields of the technologies dealt with by the ASPRS. These “home fields” can include agriculturalists, foresters, geologists, planners, biologists, civil engineers and many others. It is from others who have followed this path in the past that useful lessons have been learned and applied anew as awareness grows of the usefulness of our technologies.

In many cases students found that the ASPRS served to introduce them to faculty members whose interests meshed with their own, helping them better focus on education that led to the best career path. Other benefits and useful outcomes included making a contact that directly led to employment and finding mentors who have jump-started careers. Another outcome from ASPRS membership found in all phases of a career is the development of lasting friendships, often developed while pursuing volunteer opportunities in the ASPRS.

The networking-related benefits noted above have been associated with regional and student chapters as well as conferences, workshops, and columns in the journal. And of course, beneficial outcomes also include lower cost access to key manuals and publications. Finally, we have seen older students become mentors for those who are younger and just starting out on their voyage of discovery. That sort of mentor activity pays dividends for both the mentor and mentee.

Early Professional

After college the ASPRS continues to provide value to the early professional. Again, many of the benefits are associated with connecting with others. One respondent told us that for “my first entry level job, I was hired by someone who I knew through ASPRS. Without that connection, I wouldn’t be where I am today! ASPRS has been integral to my growth as an early professional.”

The importance and value ascribed to supporting the needs of the early professional are seen in the ASPRS’s Early Career Professionals Council. The continuing value for the early professional can include keeping up with how newer technology can be used in an operational setting to better meet the needs of one’s employer. At the same time the ASPRS helps continuously expand one’s community, linking the early professional to friends and future co-workers. These outcomes can be met through access to workshops, podcasts, the Journal, conferences, student chapters, regional meetings and other sources of information provided by the ASPRS. By the same token, early professionals can improve their career prospects through the information sources noted, as well as involvement in appropriate technical workshops. There is no better way to meet potential mentors and like-minded professionals than at ASPRS meetings and the more formal mentor programs that the ASPRS supports. And, as noted for students, early professionals can often serve in the role of mentor for those less experienced and by so doing build confidence and leadership skills.

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Mid-Career

The beneficial outcomes associated with ASPRS membership for mid-career professionals continue to expand over one's career. As one respondent noted "the society's firm commitment to professional growth has been a cornerstone of my career advancement. The access to conferences, workshops, and publications has not only kept me abreast of the latest trends and technologies in photogrammetry and remote sensing but has also provided a dynamic forum for engaging with industry experts and thought leaders from around the globe."

The opportunities to be involved through the ASPRS are numerous and interesting to the wide range of members the Society attracts. One respondent noted the opportunity developed under the auspices of the ASPRS to participate in collaborative research projects. Another noted the opportunity to be involved in the development of manuals and standards. An ASPRS member at the mid-career phase can often be involved as a volunteer committee member, workshop or pod-cast leader, on the Board or serving as a regional executive. One member noted that one of the most rewarding activities at mid-career and beyond has been mentoring.

With more experience and contact with others, those in the mid-career phase of their careers become candidates for one of the several professional certifications offered by the Society. Recognized in the US and around the world, ASPRS certifications and standards are "a testament to ASPRS's commitment to promoting excellence and professional standards within the geospatial field." These standards and certification activities lead to an important set of outcomes. These include building leadership skills, establishing a solid professional reputation, and learning from being a volunteer in the ASPRS' many technical activities. Lastly, there is the continuing nurturing of the friendships that the ASPRS is so well known for cultivating.

Senior Science Manager/Leader

The ASPRS plays a key role in the management and application of the science and technology with which the Society is engaged. Many members will become senior managers and leaders of organizations that develop and apply the science and technologies with which we work. At this stage of their careers, they may, for example, influence the transitioning of outdated approaches to those that bring improved efficiency and accuracy. In this case the beneficial outcome is for the organization – which in turn reflects on the organization's leader.

Long-time members who have become leaders have usually availed themselves of the many opportunities in the ASPRS to network and build a community of friends and colleagues upon which they can rely in their new roles. Indeed, several leaders responding for this column have attributed reaching this stage in their career to being active ASPRS members. Quite simply, the importance of developing a personal community earlier in a career pays off now.

At the same time, we know that many of those leading organizations that require our technologies to do the work with which they have been entrusted have come up through other fields and do not have the expertise in the spatial sciences that is often called for – and always needed. These leaders need the trusted voice and technical materials that the ASPRS members provide.

The senior science manager/leader is often found giving back to and through the ASPRS by hosting local meetings, providing student tours and serving as mentors. "That is what leaders do!"

Retirees

As a retiree the senior author has many reasons to remain an ASPRS member, as do many of those I first met almost fifty years ago. What is most important? We all still enjoy being part of a vibrant and exciting community. In that sense, we have come full circle from where we began in the student phase of our careers.

Authors

Robert "Bob" Ryerson is a Fellow of the ASPRS. He joined the ASPRS as a student member in 1968 and over the years has served on the ASPRS Board and several committees. He is a former Director General of the Canada Centre for Remote Sensing and is the retired President of Kim Geomatics Corporation. He held the designation CMS (RS115) until his retirement.

Brian Huberty (CMS 130RS) joined the ASPRS as a student member in 1982. Brian has served on the ASPRS Board, Primary Data Acquisition Division Director and Western Great Lakes Region President. He also co-chaired the 2011 ASPRS National Conference in Milwaukee. Brian is the past remote sensing leader for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. He currently serves as the President of the Minnesota Forestry Association where he is mapping and monitoring our natural carbon storage factories - our forests.

Lauren McKinney-Wise is the former ASPRS Student Advisory Council Chair and has been active in her local student ASPRS chapter since 2016. She also helps to lead a local Women in GIS group. She was selected as one of the 23 GIS professionals to watch in 2023 by XYHeight magazine and recently completed her master's at Portland State University.

Hamdy Elsayed is an accomplished professional with over 17 years of global geospatial expertise, He obtained his Ph.D. in Geomatics Engineering from Toronto Metropolitan U, Canada. Presently, he is the Innovation Manager at Tele-dyne Geospatial, a co-editor of the ASPRS Sector Insight column, and serves on the board of directors for the Canadian Remote Sensing Society.