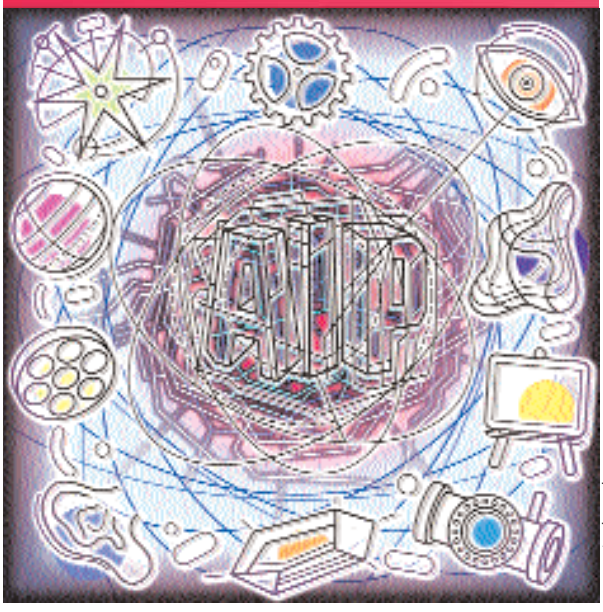

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The Optical Society of America

by Colleen Morrison

The Optical Society of America (OSA) began in 1916 in Rochester, New York, as a gathering of the field's leading scientists, who agreed to create an organization through which scientific ideas, interests, and discoveries could be shared. The society still adheres to its founders' original goals, and today, OSA carries forward the spirit and vision of its first members.

The society's mission has remained throughout the years to "promote the generation, application, and archiving of knowledge in optics and photonics and to disseminate this knowledge worldwide." As one of the premier associations for those working in optics and photonics, OSA's activities center around the needs and interests of the scientific and engineering communities by providing a breadth of conferences, education initiatives, and publications that benefit the field as a whole.

OSA is governed by committees, councils, and a board of directors. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the society employs a staff of 125. "OSA truly is run by its membership," says Elizabeth Rogan, OSA executive director. "The board of directors—exempting the treasurer, who is appointed by the board—is elected by its peers and colleagues. Our members are the heart and soul of the society. Their efforts guide the organization's activities, and their vision helps us to prepare to meet the needs that members will have in the years ahead."

OSA brings together the worldwide community of optics and photonics scientists, business leaders, engineers, educators, students, and technicians. Its nearly 15,000 individual members from more than 100 countries benefit from special educational programs, free or discounted journal subscriptions, special events, and online and career services. OSA's corporate associate members represent the field's leading commercial and nonprofit organizations with an interest in optics. OSA is a founding member society of the American Institute of Physics' ten member societies.

The society has a worldwide network of local sections and student chapters. These organizations provide the regional outreach so important to serving local scientists and communities. The society is always looking to expand its reach, both in the United States and abroad, through its sections and chapters.

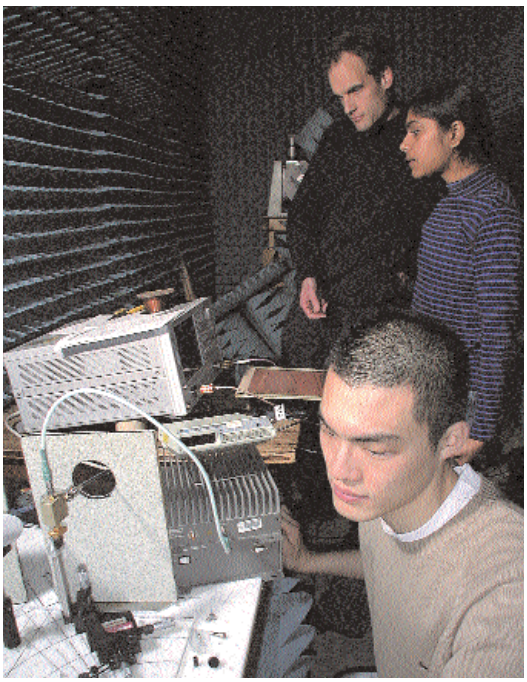
"When I was OSA President in 2002, I began my term with the personal goal of expanding OSA's worldwide growth," says Anthony Johnson of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. "Through hard work and dedication, we have made this vision a reality. We now have four student chapters in Canada, one in Turkey, two in Ghana, and two in Brazil. Outreach continues, and these efforts help the global scientific community to share knowledge and resources."

OSA journals, monographs, and proceedings are the publications of choice for those who need accurate, timely information in the field of optics and photonics. OSA peer-reviewed journals set the standard for advanced optics research within each major sector of the field and are among the most cited resources in optics. These journals include *Applied Optics*, *Journal of the Optical Society of America (JOSA) A*, *JOSA B*, *Optics Letters*, *Optics Express*, *Journal of Optical Technology*, *Journal of Lightwave Technology*, and the *Journal of Optical Networking*.

Optics InfoBase, OSA's online journal information repository (www.opticsinfobase.org), enables Web site visitors to search its records for peer-reviewed papers that have appeared in OSA journals. *Optics and Photonics News*, OSA's monthly magazine, provides timely news and analysis of some of optics' hottest topics, and updates on OSA activities, meetings, and product and service developments.

OSA also hosts and co-sponsors some of the field's most important conferences, expositions, and topical meetings, including the Optical Fiber Communications Conference and Exposition (OFC), the Conference on Lasers and Electro-Optics (CLEO), and the International Quantum Electronics Conference (IQEC). In 2004, the CLEO/IQEC co-sponsors will launch a new engineering-focused conference called Photonic Applications, Systems, and Technologies (PhAST). Colocated with CLEO/IQEC, PhAST will provide a new perspective and draw a new audience to the CLEO/IQEC forum. For the first time, attendees will be able come to a single cluster of events that offers differing views of the optics and photonics industry. CLEO, IQEC, and PhAST will provide a complete picture of the field, with presentations that follow a concept from theory to scientific research to practical application. For more information, log onto www.phastconference.org.

From introductory courses to in-depth sessions focusing on the latest research in a specialized area, OSA conferences present technical information in a variety of formats, all with the goal of providing high-quality educational opportunities. These sessions include peer-reviewed technical-paper presentations, special symposia and panel discussions, accredited short courses, hands-on workshops and demonstrations, business- and application-focused pro-



Jim Beal, University of Wisconsin–Madison, College of Engineering

Daniel Van der Weide, an OSA member and associate professor in the department of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, directs graduate students in terahertz research.

grams, and large-scale commercial exhibits.

OSA's annual meeting provides an opportunity for members to exchange ideas and network with colleagues. In 2003, OSA debuted many programs and events along with a new name for the meeting, "Frontiers in Optics." The 2003 meeting, held in Tucson, Arizona, on Oct. 5–9, included themes and sessions developed and managed by OSA's technical divisions.

Recognized throughout the sector, OSA awards emphasize the successes of the field's leaders. The society honors distinguished achievement in the science of optics through the presentation of three categories of awards and honors. The first category, the highest award of the society for overall distinction in optics, is the Frederic Ives Medal. The second category consists of awards for general distinction and includes those named OSA Fellows. Any individual OSA member is eligible for nomination. The third category consists of specialty awards given for excellence in a particular optics discipline.

"One of the proudest moments of my career was becoming an OSA Fellow," says Alan Willner of the University of Southern California. "What made becoming a Fellow so special was that it was also the same day that my mentors, Ivan Kaminow and Tingye Li, whom I had nominated for the OSA Charles H. Townes Award and the Frederic Ives Medal, found out that they had been selected to receive those honors. It was extraordinarily meaningful to share that experience with them."

Education outreach is one of the most significant ways OSA supports local communities and inspires tomorrow's young scientists. These activities include www.OPTICSforKIDS.org; the Hands on Optics program, a national middle-school science-education program; the Education and Training in Optics & Photonics (ETOP) conference; Educator's Day; the Forum on Education; local science fair sponsorship; and instructive materials such as the Optics Discovery Kit and educational videos.

OSA also provides several career services, including WORKinOPTICS.com, one of the field's leading online search engines featuring optics-related job postings, a resume bank, and consultant listings. The society also manages career centers during OFC and CLEO, complete with resume distribution, online posting, on-site interviews, and career workshops.

The recently formed OSA Foundation supports the society's philanthropic activities. Programs in 2003 consist of support for professional and student scientists in developing countries, outreach to young students and grade-school teachers, services for university students and advisors, and a special-purpose fund that allows donors to specify what their contributions will support. The society's public-policy program promotes the interests of optical science and engineering with the U.S. Congress and federal agencies.

The Optical Society of America is a thriving organization, dedicated to the advancement of its field and to the professional development of its members. For more information about OSA programs and services, and to join the society, please visit www.osa.org or call 202-416-1437.

BIOGRAPHY

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