

# President's Message

*"If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people."*

—Guan Zhong

January 2016 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Optical Society (OSA). Clearly, we're a society that, to echo the quote above, thinks in terms of 1, 10 and 100 years. OSA is continually starting activities that address its constituents' emerging near-term needs; coordinating advocacy and community-building that may take several years to bear fruit; and positioning the society, both intellectually and financially, to adapt for the long term. OSA plants seeds, such as workshop incubators and special-publication issues. It plants trees, such as new open-access publications and congressional visits. And it teaches people, through a highly cited journals portfolio, hundreds of student chapters, dozens of meetings, and coordination with global sister societies.

Almost all professional optics and photonics societies have benefited greatly from OSA over the past 100 years. OSA has always looked at other organizations as helping in its mission to spread the word of optics. We hold by the philosophy, "if you want to be exponentially better, be cooperative." It is not by accident that many presidents and prime ministers of nations around the world have now uttered the words "optics" and "photonics."

For the past 30 years, I personally have gained enormously from being an OSA member. The society has given me a high-quality venue to discuss technical ideas and learn best practices. Moreover, I count many OSA colleagues as close personal friends. I can't imagine my past or future career without OSA.

Out of curiosity, I recently chatted with several persons who have been members since the 1940s, and with several others who have joined within the past year. It was truly inspiring and heartwarming to hear some of our longest-standing members describe how OSA played such a large part in their careers, and how our newest members hope for this same blessing.

The aspirations embodied in some of OSA's earliest founding documents, from 100 years ago, resonate equally today. The society's opportunities "extend far beyond" functions such as "hold[ing] meetings a few times a year and ... publish[ing] a journal"; from the beginning, "the aim and purpose of this society" has been "to increase and diffuse the knowledge of optics," and to promote the mutual interests of, and cooperation among, scientists, manufacturers and users of optics. The society exists "to serve the interests of all who are engaged in any branch of optics." And "international cooperation" was central to OSA from the beginning; indeed, the president of the Optical Society of London was an ex-officio member.

At our core, we really haven't changed too much, except that optics plays an ever-larger role in so many parts of our lives.

This year's multifaceted Centennial activities are under the outstanding leadership of OSA Member and 2011 President Chris Dainty (interviewed on p. 16 of this issue of *Optics & Photonics News*) and OSA staff member Monique Rodriguez. The celebration's tagline is "Reflecting a Century of Innovation"—but the event also looks squarely toward the next century. We are 19,000 members strong, have counted dozens of Nobel Laureates as members, and are at the center of humankind-disrupting technologies. We have an illustrious past and expect to plant many seeds, plant many trees, and help to teach many people in the next 100 years.

Happy birthday, OSA. Now let's party!



OSA

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Respectfully and warmly submitted,

*Alan Willner,*  
OSA President