

—President's Message

My name is Satoshi Kawata, and I am pleased to greet you as the 2022 President of Optica. I look forward to communicating with you in this space in OPN, to discuss my experience and thoughts in this role—I believe it will be a great pleasure and a wonderful opportunity for us to connect.

As we begin a new year, I first would like to sincerely thank and compliment my predecessor in this office, 2021 Optica President Connie Chang-Hasnain, on her leadership last year. The past two years have been difficult for Optica due to the COVID-19 pandemic—indeed, in the 106 years of the society's governance, I do not believe it has experienced such a challenging and demanding period worldwide. It must have brought much stress and frustration for Connie, who frequently was asked to make decisions on changing the original schedules, locations and styles of conferences and meetings. As an Optica member I am so grateful to Connie, and to her predecessor Stephen Fantone, for their wise guidance during those two unprecedented years.

The good news is that the society invested resources during the pandemic into several initiatives that have steered it even more toward a successful future. Its 2021 rebranding, under the new name of Optica, is one example. Another has been the organization's nimbleness in adapting to virtual meetings and conferences.

Yet even this progress carries challenges. In November 2021, for example, the society's annual meeting, FiO+LS, was held online—and, while it took place during the day in Washington, DC, it was the middle of the night in Asia. Advanced technologies such as video and audio streaming, broadband telecommunications and artificial intelligence do make it possible for people in different time zones to meet in a virtual conference. But human beings are not machines—we cannot adapt to 24-hour activity; we need to sleep at night.

In light of this, during FiO+LS, I did an experiment. I invited VIP Optica members living in Japan to participate in a branch of FiO located not in Washington, DC, but in Tokyo. Fifty Optica members gathered and met in person, during the day, in a Tokyo conference room. They listened to a (pre-recorded) lecture by Joseph Goodman from the Washington, DC, FiO plenary session, with additional material included by Professor Goodman specifically for the Japan event. The group also enjoyed a live invited FiO talk from Hiroshi Yoshikawa in Tokyo.

I noticed that even though audience members were unable to ask questions directly to Professor Goodman, they still discussed his talk in person among themselves. The experience leads me to hope that such multi-hub conferences could emerge as a new, more globally accessible kind of event, without the pain and difficulty caused by spanning multiple time zones.

As the first Optica President based in Japan, and far from America and Europe, I hope to promote such efforts and experiments to continue the globalization and diversification of the society. I will be talking more about these themes in the coming months in this space. And I hope that you will consider sending your feedback on this and future messages to me at ideas@optica.org—it will be very valuable for me, and the society, to learn your perspectives as we think about improving our service for members throughout the world.



I hope to promote efforts to continue the globalization and diversification of the society.

—Satoshi Kawata,
Optica President