

Sections: Bringing AOAC Closer to You

Many AOAC members have different stories about their involvement with Sections. For me, it began in 2005 when I replied to a questionnaire from the Mid-Atlantic Section's Executive Committee to volunteer for the Section. The opportunity would benefit me as I was interested in furthering my career and learning about how I could become more involved with AOAC at the local level. As it turned out, I became president of the Section for the next 2 years, which was a challenging and rewarding experience.

The old adage that "the more you give, the more you get back" is certainly true in my case. As president of the Mid-Atlantic Section, I worked with a remarkable group of people, learned more about AOAC, and provided colleagues in my scientific area with valuable educational opportunities in their fields. During my tenure, the Executive Committee of the Mid-Atlantic Section organized two highly valuable meetings,



which allowed me to meet and interact with colleagues that otherwise I would not have met, or would have taken longer to meet. It was the beginning of a new and amazing adventure with AOAC that, so far, has kept me motivated and active at the local and national levels.

After serving as president of the Mid-Atlantic Section, I became the chair of the AOAC Committee on Sections, which comprises executives from all the AOAC Sections worldwide. The mission of the committee is to "promote and support the purpose and objectives of the Association and review and propose recommendations for actions to the Board of Directors on all policies

and procedures relative to AOAC Sections."

Indeed, the Committee on Sections is the vehicle of communication between the Board of Directors and individual Sections. Its responsibility is to support and aid each Section on its development, obtain a greater participation of members, and provide information and education about AOAC.

Sections and Problem Solving

One of the objectives related to President Sam Page's vision for the year is the exploration of new approaches to support Sections and to incorporate Sections into helping recognize global problems and solving them through science-based solutions. I, too, share in this goal and would like to see AOAC Sections identify issues within their geographic area. Section members cut across different scientific work places. AOAC has over 3000 members, and with the expertise and knowledge within the membership, Sections can help solve global problems related to AOAC's purview.

Thailand—AOAC's Newest Section

At the AOAC Annual Meeting in Anaheim, California, USA, Thailand was one area identified that required closer affiliation with AOAC. Therefore, as reported in the January/February 2008 issue of ILM, the AOAC Board of Directors in December 2007 approved the creation of the William Horwitz Grant in an effort to establish AOAC Sections in developing countries. Subsequently, the Thailand Section was approved to receive the

first grant in January 2008 under the new program. The establishment of the Thailand Section provides the opportunity to bring education and information about AOAC to this area of the world. The Thailand Section recognized the necessity to be formally affiliated with AOAC, and AOAC hopes to assist the Section in many of its industry issues. With AOAC's guidance, it is hoped that the Section will prosper and thrive in the coming years.

Current Sections

AOAC currently includes 17 Sections, nine of them located in the United States and eight in diverse parts of the world. Interestingly, four Sections are located in South East Asia (Japan, Taiwan, China, and Thailand). Some Sections are highly active, such as the Midwest Section (490 members) and the Southern Section (369 members), both of which hold 3-day annual meetings. In addition, the Pacific Southwest Section, which has 220 members, coordinates a 4-day annual meeting.

The Committee on Sections encourages all AOAC Sections to be involved. To this end, we need your help. The value of volunteering at the local level, to me, is priceless, and it may be for you as well. AOAC values its Sections and would like to engage members in order to create an even stronger Association, full of committed and energetic members.

In fact, there are many ways to be involved. Volunteers can be part of the Executive Committee of the Sections, aid in the identification of

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paper is accepted, rejected, or accepted with revisions based on reviewer recommendations. All work is done electronically via AOAC's ScholarOne Manuscript Central submission process.

Reviewers gain invaluable information, keeping abreast of the latest technology and techniques in the analytical sciences community. Qualified reviewers must be actively involved in

one of the following technical areas: agricultural materials, dietary supplements, drug formulations and clinical methods, food biological and chemical contaminants, food composition and additives, pesticide residues and trace elements, statistical analysis, or veterinary drug residues.

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speakers for one's respective annual meetings, or coordinate vendors during the meeting. Volunteers can also help identify venues for meetings or serve as the contact person if the meeting site is local. In addition, volunteers can assist in the logistics, promotion, and recruitment of new local members. For many members and nonmembers at the Section level, it is hoped that the first interaction with AOAC sparks one's interest and that the momentum to stay involved remains strong.

As with all associations, the future rests on its membership. I joined AOAC because I wanted an association that would be with me during my

entire career. For me, AOAC provides the necessary tools to become a better professional and the opportunities to interact with experts in my field of interest. AOAC has broadened my horizons, but it has also helped me focus on what I enjoy most at work—methods development. In fact, the Association has played an integral part during my recent career transition, providing the necessary support and resources to ease my transition from food chemistry to food microbiology. As an active member of the AOAC Mid-Atlantic Section, I am grateful to the Section for allowing me to interact with local colleagues. Furthermore, the time I invest in this scientific

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organization proves a valuable learning and rewarding experience. I am more than glad that I responded to that questionnaire 3 years ago.

I challenge you to become involved with your local AOAC Section. If you are not an active member already, I encourage you to contact the president or chair by visiting the AOAC Web site at www.aoac.org to start participating in the future of the Association. If you would like to reinvigorate

your Section, contact me at socrates.trujillo@fda.hhs.gov, and I can help facilitate the revitalization of your Section with AOAC staff assistance. Indeed, it is a great time to be a member of AOAC, participate at the Section level, and get the most of your AOAC membership. ■

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General Guidelines and Information About Analytical Communities

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private sector and governments to help secure funding. In addition, AOAC has also initiated a Business and Liaison Advisory Committee (BLAC) to provide strategic guidance on business directions and liaisons with other organizations. The BLAC is responsible for recommending to the Board of Directors strategic business investments.

Communities can look to AOAC to help facilitate the volunteer consensus process and method validation. In return, they receive benefits that include:

- *Official Methods of Analysis*SM (OMA) status or method approvals
- Standards development
- Outreach to AOAC members
- Access to the *Journal of AOAC INTERNATIONAL* (*J. AOAC Int.*)

- Publication in *J. AOAC Int.*
- Contribution of expertise
- Membership benefits
- Access to volunteer expertise [Official Methods Board (OMB), Methods Committees]
- Laboratory Proficiency Testing
- Professional development
- Training
- Access to AOAC Sections
- Instant network of over 3000 members worldwide

AOAC Resources

AOAC provides forums for members to network with other members in their community. Since 1884, the AOAC Annual Meeting and Exposition has been the venue for communities to network with current members and to encourage nonmembers to become involved.

e-Communities is available at no cost for communities to reach out to AOAC members. AOAC allows communities to provide a Web page for their members to post information. *Inside Laboratory Management* (ILM) is another forum available to provide in-depth articles about community activity. Communities are urged to use ILM as a means to provide information to all members. The Referee section of the magazine has been revamped to accommodate community stakeholder group activities in support of voluntary consensus.

AOAC members also serve as a valuable resource. Communities can look to the Board of Directors, OMB, AOAC Sections, and the overall membership for direction and advice. Within each of

these groups, there are inspiring stories that communities can learn from and gain valuable insight on developing into a thriving success.

AOAC is available to help with questions and provide advice on how to take one's community to the next level. AOAC is an excellent resource for stakeholder development. Over the last several years, AOAC has been highly successful in bringing groups together and providing solutions to global problems. ■

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