

ASTC President's Report 2022-2023

This year was particularly challenging because I and our whole committee were so new to our roles. Of course we were never more than an email away from past Presidents Janet Taylor, Dave Newdick, or David Cross, but I admit that I never quite got over that “deer in the headlights” feeling. That being said, I feel our year was a successful one, and I'd like to highlight some of our successes.

Website

It took us 8 months, but we finally gained full control of our website. Up until now, we haven't had administrator access, which limited our ability to make changes and view financial details. With this access, we now have the ability to make much needed improvements to the website.

Google Suite

We contacted Google informing them of our non-profit status, which allowed us to shift our paid Google account to a free Google for Business account. This give us free access to the full range of applications in the Google suite including Drive, Docs, Sheets, Forms, and Email. We're slowly migrating files from Sync to Google Drive.

Zoom

After our non-profit success with Google, I tried the same thing with Zoom. While we weren't able to get Zoom for free, we were able to negotiate a discount. For approximately the same as we were paying previously, we were able to add a second licence, meaning we didn't have to run every meeting on the one licence.

Canva Teams

Again, attempting to take advantage of our non-profit status, we tried to get Canva Teams access. This was unsuccessful, but we decided to purchase it anyway. Melissa Teo set up the branding details for our team account, and it's been incredibly useful for creating our social media posts and some of our graphics. It will become more and more useful as we figure out all the things we can use it for.

Members' Meetings

A big thank you to Janet Taylor who continued to run the Members' Meetings this year. She sourced the speakers each month and set up the zoom calls. I was very grateful because It was one less thing I had to think about as a first-time president.

ISTC Communicator

As a benefit to our members, we agreed to purchase copies of the “Communicator”, the ISTC’s quarterly newsletter. Each newsletter is available for members through the ASTC website.

The “Journal”

This is a joint venture between ASTC, ISTC in the UK, and TechCommNZ, to produce an online newsletter for all of our members. It’s still in the pilot stages, but we hope to have something to release to our respective members in January 2024.

Annual Conference

We made the decision early on to run the Conference as a hybrid in-person and remote event. We didn’t make this decision lightly, because the AV solution was very expensive.

Although we’ll make a loss on the Conference, I still feel it was a great success. We had 36 in-person attendees and 26 remote attendees, making it one of the best attended Conferences in years. Feedback from all our presenters was fantastic, all saying how much they loved presenting in-person again. Much of the feedback from our remote attendees was “it was almost like being there.” That alone tells me the high cost of the AV was worth it.

We’ll definitely have to look at our finances for next year, including our fee structure and obtaining more sponsorship, but we certainly don’t have to be frightened about putting on a hybrid event.

Thank you’s

Massive thanks to the 2022-2023 Committee, including:

- Jason Xiros, Vice President. Jason was incredibly helpful and supportive, especially for his insightful comments and suggestions into just about everything. Jason first brought up the idea of a regular weekly catch-up meeting to discuss events of the past week and preview things coming up. Which of course I kept forgetting about for the first 2 months. But Jason never once took offence and kept showing up for the meetings. Eventually I got the hang of things and I looked forward to these weekly meetings.
- Carl Sarelius, Treasurer. I think this is the role that Carl has been performing forever! And as usual, he kept a keen eye on the Society’s finances. At the beginning of the year, Carl also looked after website maintenance, which he handed over to Sarah Stubbs and myself.

- Michelle Hornstein, Secretary. We started the year without a Secretary, which according to our constitution, is the most important role of the committee. I approached Michelle to ask if she would take on the role, and even though she had many other non-ASTC commitments, she thankfully agreed. Thank you, Michelle!
- Sarah Stubbs, General Committee Member. Sarah took over from Carl for the website maintenance. Sarah suggested that we create a Communications Subcommittee, which she was an active part of. Sarah's other major contribution was creating the Conference Program. The Program was hours and hours and hours of work, and I believe was a fantastic document for the Conference.
- Julia Ponder, General Committee Member. Julia took over the Member and Job Opportunities emails from David Cross. Julia also participated in the Communications Subcommittee with Sarah Stubbs and myself.
- Colin Sheppard, General Committee Member. This was Colin's first year on the Committee. And I congratulate him for sticking with us! It's not always easy when you come into something new like this, and he always put his hand up to help out where he thought he could. He was very helpful in organising the pull-up banners for the Conference. I hope he'll stick with us for at least another year!
- David Stephensen and Melissa Teo were also General Committee Members at the beginning of the year, but had to drop out because of other commitments. In particular, Melissa was very helpful in setting up our Canva account and getting together a shortlist of Conference venues.

Conclusion

Did we get everything right this year? Absolutely not. But I feel we've learned a lot, and with that experience, we can go into this next year much more confident and assured that we can provide great benefit and value to our ASTC members.

It's been an honour and a pleasure to serve as ASTC President in 2022-2023.

Grant Noble
16 October, 2023