THE INSTITUTE REVIEW

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May 2021

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2021 Environmental Measurement Symposium

Hitting Reset

August 2—12, 2021

By Lara Phelps, USEPA and Jerry Parr, TNI

The 2021 Environmental Measurement Symposium (Symposium), which is the combined meeting of The NELAC Institute's (TNI's) Forum on Environmental Accreditation (Forum) and the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC), will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Bellevue, WA from August 2-5, 2021, and virtually from August 2-5 and 9-12, 2021. Although our 2020 virtual conference was a great success, we decided for 2021 to be a hybrid meeting with one week in-person plus virtual event and the second week a virtual event only. We are confident by late summer more people will be allowed to safely participate in person, which is the basis of the Steering Committee's decision.

The NEMC portion of the Symposium will feature 153 oral presentations and 30 poster presentations, organized into 4 tracks. There will be 4 plenary presentations on the conference theme, 2 keynote presentations, 4 lunch presentations, and a special general session with updates from the US Environmental Protection Agency's (the Agency's) program offices. The TNI Forum will include an Assessment Forum, a Mentor Session, a special session on updates on TNI activities, and 8 TNI committee meetings. There will also be an exhibit program showcasing the latest innovations in environmental monitoring and an innovative new technology showcase.

Attendees can register for the tracks they wish to attend or register for all tracks to view recordings of all presentations and meetings after the conference. The titles of the presentations, abstracts, and authors can be found on the NEMC website.

ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY TRACK (43 Presentations)

- Advances in High Resolution Mass Spectrometry and Its Emerging Environmental Applications
- Collaborative Efforts to Improve Environmental Monitoring (2 Sessions)
- Drinking Water
- Environmental Sensors & Instrumentation
- Instrumentation Focus: LCMS
- New Organic Monitoring Techniques (2 Sessions)

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING TRACK (36 Presentations)

- Advances in Field Sampling, Measurement, and Sensor Technologies
- Air Methods, Monitoring, and Technology (2 Sessions)
- Shale Oil and Gas
- Citizen Science

- Metals Analysis and Remediation
- SARS CoV-2/Wastewater Testing - State of the Science (2 Sessions)

LABORATORY OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TRACK (31 Presentations)

- Identifying and Combatting Inappropriate Laboratory Practices
- Best Management Practices for Environmental Laboratories
- Crafting Consensus Methods for Environmental Sampling and Measurement
- Laboratory Informatics
- Data Quality, Management, and Review
- Operational Issues Impacting the Environmental Laboratory Industry

EMERGING CONTAMINANTS TRACK (42 Presentations)

- Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in the Environment (4 Sessions)
- Analyzing Microplastics in the Environment (2 Sessions)
- California Efforts to Regulate Microplastics

INNOVATIVE NEW TECHNOLOGY SHOWCASE

Tuesday, August 3, 2020; 3:30 – 5:00 pm PDT

For the sixth year in a row, up to twelve (12) organizations will showcase innovative new technologies – sensors, apps, and personal monitoring devices, among others – and network with managers and senior staff from commercial laboratories; the regulated community; the Agency's regulatory program offices, regional and headquarters compliance staff; state compliance officials; tribal nations; the international community; the exhibitor community; and others involved in or affected by the Agency's policies and procedures.

EXHIBIT PROGRAM

The Exhibit Program in Bellevue will be held from August 2 – 4 and will feature a companion Virtual Exhibit Hall available to attendees from August 2 through September 30, 2021. The Virtual Exhibit Hall will be a web space where companies share information about their products and services, showcase their latest innovations, and connect with research collaborators and customers. If you are interested in becoming an exhibitor, please contact us at joel.holtz@nelac-institute.org.

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Hit Reset in The PNW

By Lee Wolf, Pacific Consulting LLC

With the Environmental Measurement Symposium (EMS) getting back to at least a partial in-person event in August, attendees coming to Bellevue, Washington will have long days and pleasant weather to do some exploring. The Bellevue area and "The PNW" (The Pacific Northwest for those of you needing assistance with local acronyms) offer a lot to do and see this time of year.

Bellevue is the eastside next-door neighbor to Seattle, across Lake Washington. Bellevue and its closer neighboring cities of Issaquah, Bothell, Woodinville, and Kirkland (yes, Kirkland as in the home of Costco) offer plenty of great eateries, brew pubs, wineries, parks, shopping, and outdoor opportunities. Our hotel will be within walking distance of many venues and is very close to I-405 access, leading to nearby attractions.

History

Bellevue was first settled by European American homesteaders in 1869, although it would take ten (10) more years until permanent residents arrived. The area remained a logging and small-scale farming area for many years. By the early part of the 20th century, Bellevue had acquired a reputation as a weekend getaway destination for Seattle residents, who would arrive by ferry and crowd tiny Bellevue for fairs and berry festivals. The opening of the Lake Washington Floating Bridge in 1940 led the way to early growth, and the highway 520 floating bridge (now known as the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge) remains a primary corridor today and is somewhat of an iconic symbol connecting the Bellevue area with Seattle.

Today Bellevue and surrounding suburbs are defined by large technology, as it is home to headquarters or mega-offices of some of the world's largest technology companies. This includes Microsoft, Amazon, Expedia, T-Mobile US, eBay, Oracle, Salesforce, and Google. Construction has begun on Amazon's new 43-story, 600-foot-tall "Bellevue 600" tower that will be the tallest building in Bellevue (and the tallest to be built by Amazon) when completed. It is hard to imagine small farms and berry fields in their place a century ago.

Parks and Museums

Downtown Park is about three (3) blocks from our hotel and is a great place to do a walk-through. The park has a great water feature, walking paths, and large grass area for relaxation. Meydenbauer Beach Park is also nearby (about six (6) blocks) and is a smaller waterfront park with walking trails, a great view of the Bellevue skyline, and a unique pedestrian pier that curves out into Lake Washington.

The Bellevue Botanical Garden is located roughly two (2) miles from our hotel (walking not recommended) at Wilburton Hill Park. The garden is 53-acres of cultivated gardens, restored woodlands, and natural wetlands, showcasing plants that thrive in the Pacific Northwest. The park also includes short walking trails and other smaller botanical displays and gardens, even a ground cover garden.

The Bellevue Arts Museum is less than two (2) blocks from our hotel, and as of this writing is open limited days of the week. Exhibits change from time to time, so check the website.

If you are considering Seattle, the Museum of Pop Culture (formerly known as the Experience Music Project) is a fun stop, and adjacent to the Space Needle. At this writing, the Pacific Science Center, also located in the Seattle Center area, is closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, but is offering a virtual experience. The Museum of

Flight at Boeing Field is a great place and is now open limited days of the week. There are many others in Seattle, but check first before you go.

Other Venues

Bellevue sits at the western base of the Cascade mountain range, between two large lakes – Lake Washington to the west and Lake Sammamish to the east. There is a wealth of outdoor venues for the nature lover to check out while in the area, but you will need a car or ride (and maybe some hiking shoes). To name just a couple:

- Cougar Mountain Park (<10 miles away) has over 35 miles of trails through mature second growth forests, streams and wetlands, and cliffs, and nearby caves. There are great views of Lake Sammamish, the Cascades, Bellevue, Seattle and beyond.
- On the northern side of Cougar Mountain Park is the Cougar Mountain Zoo. A smaller zoo with, yes – cougars, gray wolves, and several other mammals and birds. A neat place to check out if you are close by.
- Lake Sammamish State Park (10 miles) – the 530-acre park has two lakefront beaches and trails through deciduous forest and wetlands. The park is home to great blue herons and bald eagles that nest in the park.
- Snoqualmie Falls (about 25 miles) – A scenic 270-foot waterfall and small park.
- For those with more time and don't mind the drive (about 2 hours), Mt. Rainier and Mt. Rainier National Park are fantastic in August. Meadows, wildflowers galore, and great scenery.

Shopping – our hotel is just a block from Bellevue Square, which is still a thriving indoor mall with many name-brand shops and restaurants. For a more upscale experience make the walk to The Shops At The Bravern (3-4 blocks).

For those wanting to venture into Seattle there are plenty of attractions. All relatively close together are the waterfront area with Waterfront Park and the piers, Seattle Aquarium, Pike Street Market area where you most likely will witness the iconic salmon-throwing among seafood vendors, the Space Needle, and watching the Puget Sound ferries come and go. There is also Green Lake and the Woodland Park Zoo in north Seattle.

Food and Drink

Downtown Bellevue offers most cuisines and many choices for our attendees, all within walking distance or a short ride-share. And you're in the PNW so seafood is king. Some nearby seafood options are Duke's Seafood, Central Bar + Restaurant (Macadamia Nut Halibut!), The Crab Pot, and Seastar Restaurant & Raw Bar. It is also hard to go wrong with Anthony's HomePort or Ivar's (both in Kirkland 4-5 miles from our hotel), which are northwest seafood chains. There are also several steak houses and other restaurants within walking distance, such as Cactus Bellevue Square for southwest fare or Paddy Coynes Irish Pub just across the street.

We all know about the coffee, but Washington State is also known for its wines and microbrews. Many small wineries with tasting rooms and featuring Washington state wines are nearby, as well as the larger Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery and Estate. The wine buff should take the short drive north to Woodinville (<15 miles) and explore the plethora of wineries, tasting rooms, and wine shops just off highway 522 (woodinvillewinecountry.com). If you favor the hops, the Seattle-Bellevue area has been called the "craft beer basecamp" and offers a large number of taphouse and brew pub choices, so do your research. Near to our hotel are Bellevue Brewing Company (in-house beers) and The Pumphouse Bar & Grill (northwest beers).

It being August, the weather should be pleasant. But remember where you are…it could be cool and showery at times, so prepare accordingly. Regardless, get out there and explore and enjoy!

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Summary of the 2021 Forum on Environmental Accreditation"

By Jerry Parr, TNI

TNI's Annual Meeting, the Forum on Environmental Accreditation, was held as a virtual event from January 25-29, 2021. The Forum featured a general session, twelve (12) TNI committee meetings, nine (9) special sessions, and a number of presentations from vendors at the conference, either over lunch or in a special session the last day of the conference. All of the presentations can be viewed on the TNI website here. In addition, a new concept was piloted, "Networking Sessions," which occurred at the end of each day and allowed attendees to interact on a specific topic. These were very popular and effective for a virtual conference.

GENERAL SESSION

The general session constituted TNI's Annual Meeting, and featured the required presentation on TNI's accomplishments in 2020 and plans for 2021 plus a presentation on the value of accreditation and another on TNI's decision to change our long-standing use of the term "Quality System" to "Quality Management System."

TNI COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The **Asbestos Committee** reviewed its Draft Standard (EL V1M3), which is now technology-based as opposed to method-based. The Draft Standard was posted on the TNI website for the required ninety (90) day comment period which closed March 21, 2021. No comments were received in the virtual committee meeting or during the comment period. The committee is moving forward to finalize this Draft Standard. Although no comments were received, and thus none addressed, the requirement to publish a Response to Comments document will be done.

The **Chemistry Committee** continues to reconsider and/or clarify of the requirements for Initial and Continuing Demonstration of Capabilities for the laboratory and individual analysts, as well as the detection limit and calibration language that was added for the 2016 EL V1M4. The Committee dealt with numerous (approximately twenty (20)) Standard Interpretation Requests (SIR) submitted by users of the chemistry module (EL V1M4). These SIRs spanned the breadth of Module 4. The committee also worked with the Quality Systems Expert Committee to assist in attempts to resolve the definition of Technical Manager, considering questions about the amount and type of education and the length and type of experience (both technical and supervisory).

The **Field Activities Committee** met in a combined session with the NEFAP EC. Justin Brown (Chair, NELAP EC) provided a NEFAP update sharing information about the new NEFAP Strategic Plan and the Committee's activities to implement that Plan. Scott Haas (Chair, FAC) shared the Recommended Summary of Changes to the FSMO Standard and asked for input. The Summary was then modified to incorporate the comments received. An announcement was published on the TNI website on what is being added to the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 Standard (e.g., 2014 TNI FSMO Standard language, sampling documentation, sampling plans, and definitions) instead of focusing on what has changed from the 2014 TNI Standard.

The **Laboratory Accreditation Body Committee's** conference session was a formal public meeting on the updated Draft Standard V2M1 that was posted and open for comment at the time of the meeting. The Chair described overall changes in the underlying ISO 17011:2017 document and also discussed the substantive changes to assessor qualifications, training, authorization, and competency requirements. The changed confidentiality paradigm was covered as were the newly added requirements to address risk assessment and risk mitigation. Comments made during this session will be reviewed by the committee, but will not be treated as formally submitted comments, and it was made clear to participants that only formal comments will be ruled persuasive or non-persuasive with responses returned to the commenter(s).

The **Microbiology Committee** presented comments from a public webinar on changes to EL V1M5 and discussed potential new language relative to sterility checks and testing of supplies.

The **Proficiency Testing Expert Committee** reviewed their accomplishments for 2020 and plans for 2021, including a revision of EL V1M1, the PT requirements for laboratories.

During the **NELAP Accreditation Council** meeting, AB representatives discussed operational changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Laboratory testing was deemed an essential service, although at least one state took several months to establish that fact, so all NELAP ABs continued operations. Most implemented work-from-home operations with most staff coming into the office only for document retrieval and signatures. Most ABs implemented remote assessments after a period of "suspension" of assessments early on, and in-person site visits have often been shortened with more off-site document reviews.

During the **Laboratory Accreditation System Executive Committee** session, Chair Maria Friedman updated the participants about the committee's activities over the past year. Many improvements have been made to the SIR management process (SOP 3-105), a new SOP was approved for Implementation Guidance documents (SOP 3-114) and members worked closely with Consensus Standards Development Executive Committee on its update of the Standards Development SOP 2-100 to address changes from LASEC's 2019 Lessons Learned document (about development and adoption of the 2016 TNI Standard) as well as revisions required as corrective actions from the ANSI audit.

The **Proficiency Testing Program Executive Committee** provided an update on current Analytical Request Applications (ARAs) for Air & Emissions and PFAS.

The **Advocacy Committee** reviewed highlights and significant issues from the virtual winter conference and identified topics for the next newsletter. The committee's next project will be to complete the update of the "State of National Accreditation" report.

SPECIAL SESSIONS

TNI **Whole Effluent Toxicity** and **Proficiency Testing Expert and Executive Committees Joint Session**

A joint committee meeting was held to discuss openly the proficiency testing (PT) process and requirements for WETT laboratories. The meeting allowed the three committees to review and discuss proposals for standardizing testing conditions, quality control for WETT laboratories surrounding PT and discuss other topics surrounding proficiency testing as they relate to WETT. The solution requires updates in Volume 1 of the TNI Standard and updates in WET's EL V1M7. The changes needed in Volume 1 include standardizing number of

replicates per test, number of organisms per replicate, reducing the age range of test organisms. Many of the changes to V1M7 center around information the labs must document. There were questions about how the labs are supposed to do this and some PT Providers questioned why they are being asked to add additional instructions if it will be in the Standard. Labs generally don't look at the FoPT tables so placing the instructions to labs on the FoPT tables will not be helpful to solve these issues. WET Expert Committee Chair Rami Naddy shared a great slide that made it clear why PTs should not be run "by permit" — there are far too many permutations.

How TNI Accreditation Improves Laboratory Data Quality and Performance

This session featured presentations from accredited laboratories and others who shared experiences on how obtaining TNI accreditation improved the performance of their laboratory:

- *Impact of TNI Accreditation in a Municipal Environmental Laboratory,* Hunter Adams, City of Wichita Falls
- *Pathway Towards Improved Data Quality and Performance: Strategies, Challenges and Lessons Learned Implementing the TNI Standard*, Kenneth Brown, City of Escondido
- *The Benefits of TNI Accreditation for WWO Lab at City of Houston,* Harold Longbaugh, City of Houston
- *Using Accreditation to Drive a Culture of Quality*, Justin Brown, Environmental Monitoring and Technologies
- *Laboratory Accreditation: The Story Continues...,* Robin Cook, City of Daytona Beach

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC

This session featured presentations from laboratories and laboratory vendors on their experiences dealing with COVID during 2020 and on how the virus impacted laboratory operations:

- *Business as Usual?,* Kirstin Daigle, Pace Analytical Services
- *The Effect of the Pandemic on our Partnership with Environmental Labs,* Joe Boyd, Environmental Express
- *Is Laboratory Testing an Essential Service?,* Curtis Wood, ERA
- *A Year of COVID*, Michael Michaud, City of Abilene
- *Lessons Learned from the Pandemic,* Helga Alexander, International Accreditation Service, Inc.

MENTOR SESSION

- *MDLs and LOQs – How Low Can You Go?,* Silky Labie, ELCAT, LLC
- *MDL Calculation Tools – How Spreadsheets Can Work for You,* Valerie Slaven, PDC Laboratories
- *PT Evaluation under the 2016 Standard,* Kirstin Daigle, Pace Analytical Services; Craig Huff, Waters Corporation; and James Todaro, Alpha Analytical Laboratories
- *PT Tools and Tips from the Scorekeepers,* Curtis Wood, ERA
- *PT Tools and Tips from the Scorekeepers,* Josh Wyeth, Phenova, Inc.

NEW TNI INITIATIVES

- *Competency Task Force,* Jerry Parr, The NELAC Institute
- *Consumables Task Force,* Judy Morgan, Pace Analytical Services
- *Mentor Committee,* Jacob Oaxaca, CA ELAP
- *Training Committee,* Calista Daigle

HOW A QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IMPROVES LABORATORY PERFORMANCE AND DATA QUALITY

- *Reporting Results and Data Flagging,* Paul Junio, Northern Lake Service
- *Documentation and Data Reconstruction,* Shari Pfalmer, Pace Analytical Services
- *Traceability of Reference Materials and Reference Standards,* Ned Gravel, International Accreditation Service
- *Correctly Handling Samples,* David Caldwell, Oklahoma DEQ
- *Demonstration of Analyst Competency,* Marlene Moore, Advanced Systems, Inc.

WASTEWATER EPIDEMIOLOGY AND COVID-19

This session focused on current approaches to COVID-19 analysis of wastewater samples and the use of data obtained in wastewater epidemiology applications. Presentations covered the different types of methodologies used to determine presence of COVID-19 in wastewater, data application, and the uses and interpretation of those data to give a better understanding of how wastewater epidemiology can be used as a tool across different programs and information gathering efforts.

- *HRSD COVID-19 Surveillance in Southeastern Virginia Using Wastewater- based Epidemiology,* Raul Gonzalez, HRSD
- *IDEXX Method Validation for Routine Monitoring for SARS-COV-2 in Wastewater,* Jeff Bates, IDEXX
- *Sewer Surveillance for COVID-19 in Oregon,* Blythe Layton, Clean Water Service
- *Computational and Decision Analytics for Wastewater-based Epidemiology in COVID-19 Surveillance,* Mark Weir, Ohio State University

ASSESSMENT FORUM: ACCREDITATION ISSUES WITH EMERGING CONTAMINANTS

- *PFAS: The Journey to Accreditation,* Janice Willey, US Navy
- *Assessing New Emerging Contaminants and Methods for Accreditation,* Mitzi Miller, NV5/Dade Moeller
- *COVID19 in Wastewater: An Unexpected Need for a New Method and Accreditation,* Patsy Root, IDEXX
- *Microplastics: Characterization, Identification, Monitoring, and Accreditation,* Scott Coffin, CA State Water Resources Control Board and Charles Wong, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP)
- *The New Frontier in Accreditation,* Christine Sotelo and Jacob Oaxaca, California ELAP

SUCCESS STORIES WITH REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

Due to pandemic emergency restrictions and the need to ensure health and safety of both assessors and lab personnel, many Accreditation Bodies began using remote assessments. This session featured speakers from Accreditation Bodies, third-party assessors, and laboratories on how these remote assessments worked and whether or not they should continue to be used event if things return to normal.

- *ANAB Remote Assessment Process,* Zaneta Popovska, ANAB
- *Remote Assessment Success Stories: A New Perspective for Assessments,* Nick Slawson, A2LA
- *A Third-Party Assessor's Perspective to Remote Assessments,* Mitzi Miller, NV5/Dade Moeller
- *Remote Assessment from a Lab's Point of View,* Carolyn Ruttan, Clear Lake Environmental Research Center
- *Adapting to Covid-19: Remote Assessments,* Vanessa Soto Contreras, Florida DOH

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Report on the Election for the 2021 TNI Board of Directors

By Sharon Mertens, Nominating Committee Chair

As reported in the last newsletter, the election for the 2021 TNI Board of Directors took place January 15 through February 15. The newly elected Directors assumed office on March 17. There were six (6) open positions for 2021; five (5) of the Directors whose terms were up in 2021 renewed their commitment and were re-elected. A brief bio for each of these Directors is listed below. Jessica Jensen was elected to be our newest Director. You may recognize Jessica from her work as the Chair of the Quality Systems Expert Committee. Her bio follows as well. The Board had to bid a fond farewell to Dave Speis, who had served on the Board since the start of TNI and previously as a member of the INELA Board. He will be missed as he moves on to new adventures.

The Board election was presented as a slate, but members could vote for individuals if they chose to do so. Each elected Director received >90% affirmative votes that were cast by 108 members.

Board members are elected for three-year terms and roughly one-third of the Board rotates off each year. This does not include the Federal officials who serve in an Ex-Officio role as representatives of their agencies and are not elected by the membership. With this election, the Board maintains its balance of representation by the three stakeholder groups defined in our by-laws, with 5 Accreditation Bodies, 7 labs, and 9 others (includes the 3 ex-officio Directors).

Thank you to all TNI members who exercised their responsibility to vote in this election. As our membership is not large, each of your votes can make a difference. If you have questions about the election process, serving on the Board, or even next year's election, please feel free to contact me.

Welcome to our newly elected Directors. Here are their bios…

Bob Di Rienzo
US Quality Improvement Manager
ALS Environmental
Salt Lake City, UT

Bob has over thirty-five (35) years' experience related to laboratory science. In his current role, he is responsible for Quality Improvement for ALS' twelve (12) US laboratories. Bob has worked as a chemist and in a variety of laboratory management positions. He is a certified AIHA assessor for IHLAP, ELLAP, and EMLAP, and has his CQA from ASQ. Bob received his bachelor's degree from University of California, Davis in Environmental Toxicology. This will be Bob's second term on the TNI Board.

Jack Farrell
Owner, Assessor
Analytical Excellence, Inc.
Altamonte Springs, FL

Jack has decades of experience in the environmental testing industry. In his current role, he provides consulting, training and lab assessment to a wide variety of clients. He has been a member of the TNI Board since its inception and has demonstrated his ability to effectively communicate and educate on many occasions for TNI. He has been the guiding force behind the Assessment Forums. Jack has served on many other TNI committees – both standing committees and ad hoc groups formed for specific tasks.

Maria Friedman
California ELAP
Glendale, CA

Maria started working for California ELAP in January 2017 and manages the daily operations of its Assessment Unit in southern California. She is a member of the management team of CA ELAP. Previously, she spent more than twenty-five (25) years in the environmental laboratory industry, including eleven (11) years as Quality Assurance Manager. She has been an active participant in TNI since 2005 and is the current Chair of LASEC, plus being a member of the IT Committee. Previously, she chaired both the PTPEC and the SSAS Expert Committee.

N. Myron Gunsalus Jr.
Director
Kansas Office of Laboratory Services
Topeka, KS

Myron has over thirty (30) years of experience in the laboratory industry (both commercial and state), including roles as Regional Quality Assurance Director for Enseco, Director of the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Environmental Laboratory, and Quality Assurance Director for Pace Ormond Beach. In his current job, he understands both state politics and the role of an accreditation body and its responsibilities. He is renewing his term on the TNI Board and is the alternate representative for KS on the NELAP AC.

Curtis Wood
ERA
Golden, CO

Curtis has significant experience with TNI as well as strong relationships with the laboratory and accreditor communities. He has a BS in Chemistry with an MBA, and has been employed at ERA from 1989 through 2013 and from 2017 to the present. During that time, he has been involved in proficiency testing manufacturing, analysis, quality assurance, marketing, and sales. He also spent four (4) years in the industrial water treatment market working with customers who have small in-house laboratories or are users of commercial laboratory services. This would be Curtis' 2nd term "this time around" as he was a member of the TNI board until 2013. He has also participated on the PT Expert Committee and the PT Executive Committee. He currently serves as the Treasurer of TNI.

Jessica Jensen
KC Water
Kansas City, MO

Jessica is the Laboratory Assistant Manager at the City of Kansas City, MO water utility. She has over thirteen (13) years of experience working with the TNI Standard. She has over twelve (12) years of previous experience in quality assurance, laboratory analysis, assessment, and data review. Jessica has been on the TNI Quality Systems Expert Committee since 2015 and most recently served as its Chair. She has a BS in Biology.

The NELAC Institute (TNI) Annual Report

By Carol Batterton, TNI

The NELAC Institute (TNI) presented its annual report summarizing accomplishments for 2020 and plans for 2021 at the winter virtual meeting. The annual report is required by TNI's Quality Management Plan, and it calls for each committee to provide a report on their plan of work for the coming year as part of this overall report to the membership. These annual reports are reviewed and approved by the Board using its normal processes for approval of documents as described in the TNI Bylaws. The reports and plans from the committees are the Implementation Plan for the Strategic Plan.

The annual report also gives members an opportunity to review progress towards our goal of national accreditation. It includes detail on the mission of each program and committee along with the accomplishments and plans for the coming year. The report is organized by program area and includes detail on activities in:

- Administration,
- Consensus Standards Development Program (CSDP),
- National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP),
- National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP),
- Proficiency Testing (PT) program,
- Training, and
- the task forces and subcommittees established to explore new initiatives.

Also contained in the current report are membership data, financial reports, a table of method and analyte codes added in 2020, and committee rosters. The TNI Board monitors the programs' and committees' progress towards achieving their goals by evaluating monthly reports provided for Board meetings. The Board then responds and takes action as appropriate.

For greater detail on the plans and accomplishments of the various TNI programs and committees, the annual report can be reviewed in full on the TNI website here.

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Remote Assessments — The New Way Using Today's Technology

By Marlene Moore, Advanced Systems

A remote assessment is an assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a laboratory using electronic means. Availability of information and communication technology (ICT) platforms include Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Go-to-Meeting, WebEx, etc.

Accreditation Bodies (ABs) or Laboratories must be able to create virtual sites that allow persons from different physical locations to execute processes. It is an on-line environment in which processes are executed, and where demonstration of evidence, conformity, or traceability can be confirmed via electronic means.

ADVANTAGES INCLUDE:

- Reduces Cost – Travel expenses and travel time are non-existent.
- Multiple Access – Multiple sites can be addressed simultaneously, with real time document review via screen sharing, plus off-line file sharing (ShareFile, Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.).
- Health & Safety – Covid-19: Potential exposure is eliminated and quarantine requirements do not apply.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN FOR THE ASSESSMENT:

- Documents – Make these available in electronic format.
- Select Type of ICT – Allow the lab to select the type of ICT.
- Schedule Time – Test the ICT software with the lab prior to the assessment.
- Time for the Remote Assessment – Schedule during standard business hours of the lab.
- Allow time – Request electronic files from lab for off-line review by the assessor prior to the assessment dates (such as quality manuals, prior audit reports, or complaint logs), and other records (DOC, MDL).
- Connectivity – Ensure cell/internet connection at the lab location.
- Security – Address any information security and data protection measures and regulations that impact the Lab and assessors.

THE PLAN:

- Assessment Plan – Define What, When, How, and Why. The plan remains the same as an on-site assessment. The plan must satisfy the objective(s) for the accreditation, including observing the test(s) being performed.
- Lab Approval – Include the use of ICT.
- Methods – Access records and/or documents electronically. Allow time to observe test performance.

- Quite Environment – Avoid speakerphones, use a headset.
- Be Flexible & Adaptable – Things happen!
- Confidentiality – Delete lab's documents at end of assessment as defined by the AB (if appropriate).
- KISS principle – Promote the success of remote assessments
  - Assessor tells the lab what will happen – Opening Meeting
  - Assessor does what was indicated in the plan – Assessment Plan
  - Assessor tells them what was observed – Closing Session/Meeting

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Perform assessments in workstations or at home, not conference rooms.
- Allow time for breaks & lunch – consider time zones.
- Respect Interviewee's privacy, time, surroundings.
- Realize intensity of interaction - lab and assessor.
- Assessors must stay in control of the assessment.
- Be careful if documents are prepared and collated in advance.
- Use live stream over prerecorded images.
- Don't record interviews.

CHALLENGES:

- Intensity of human responses is lacking
- Field of view is limited to width of the lens
- Immediacy of the situation may compromise some aspects
- Easier for lab to hide Non-conformance Record (NCRs)
- Harder to pick up non-verbal clues
- Possibility of ICT failure that may not be rapidly fixed – need a backup plan?

CONCLUSIONS:

- Remote assessment are useful tools for assessing the site, review records and witness operations and testing.
- Remote assessments are the future of assessing – will prevail after COVID-19
- Assessment duration is about same for physical or remote audits but expect to spend more time on technology including training.
- Assessor and lab personnel must understand the technology – video, iPad, google glasses, smart phone in a pinch (facetime/recording) and plan to test prior to assessment to make sure it works.

- Remote assessments represent a good alternative to on-site assessments, but ICT training in hardware & video is crucial.
- Assessment report should include the effectiveness of ICT – what worked and what did not work.

References:

International acceptance and information of the performance of remote assessments.

IAF MD 4 IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) For Auditing/Assessment Purposes

IAF ID-12Principles on Remote Assessment

TNI Launches New Mentoring Initiative

By Jacob Oaxaca, CA ELAP

TNI is excited to announce the launch of a new Mentoring Initiative designed to directly support laboratories seeking to implement and maintain a TNI-based Quality Management System (QMS).

Through the initiative, Mentee laboratories are matched with a qualified Mentor who can serve in an advisory role and provide valuable context to quality management. Mentee laboratories participating in this initiative may choose to implement a QMS, but are not required to subsequently obtain accreditation.

As part of the launch, TNI has updated its website with a new Mentor Initiative webpage. To unlock your potential and be a charter Mentee laboratory or Mentor visit TNI Mentor Initiative webpage where you will find more information, including the Mentor Expectations and how to submit a Laboratory Mentee Survey or Mentor Interest Form.

Not every mentoring relationship is life changing.

If that is the case, one might ask, why have we not given up on mentoring? Why hasn't mentoring faded away like the latest fad? Why, at the mention of the word "mentoring", do our minds jump to thinking about all the ways we stand to benefit from a mentoring relationship?

It could be that mentoring represents potential. And potential is the spark to the flame of opportunity. The opportunity to lead, the opportunity to learn, the opportunity to instigate change. With mentoring, both the mentee and mentor have a chance at these opportunities and more.

Not every mentoring relationship is life changing. Or is it?

~ Jacob Oaxaca, Chair
TNI Mentoring Subcommittee

PT Program Changes

By Shawn Kassner, Chair, PT Program Executive Committee

The proficiency testing (PT) program within TNI is never a dull place. The program is dynamic and evolving to meet the challenges and programs that make up the user base of environmental data. The PT Executive Committee (PTPEC) has oversight of the PT program for TNI, our members represent all of the stakeholders within the TNI community, accrediting bodies, regulators, laboratories, proficiency testing providers, and consultants. Together this diverse group of individuals is tasked with developing and monitoring the PT TNI program.

For the year 2021, PTPEC is considering studying several topics that have perennially been discussed as additions and changes to the TNI PT program. The goal of the feasibility studies is to determine the regulatory and industry need, the complexity and value the additions would bring to the TNI PT Program. The additions the PTPEC is considering are:

- Radiochemistry Uncertainty to PT evaluations
- Technology based PT samples
- Addition of preparation methods to the PT program
- Air and Emissions PT Program

In addition to these topics the PTPEC will be implementing a new updated version of the Drinking Water Radiochemistry FoPT table and have begun looking at adding per- and polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) compounds to the Chemistry Drinking Water FoPT Tables.

We encourage all TNI stakeholders join our calls and provide us with your input in evolving the TNI PT program.

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SARS-CoV-2 Analysis in the Environmental Laboratory for COVID-19 Wastewater-based Epidemiology

By Stacie Crandall, HRSD

On January 21, 2020, the CDC confirmed the first United States coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) case. Within the next two (2) months multiple environmental laboratories quantified SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in wastewater. COVID-19 wastewater surveillance (also referred to as wastewater-based epidemiology) began to gain momentum as a complementary epidemiological tool at the community and building-level. By summer 2020, wastewater surveillance had gained large acceptance and widespread monitoring began across the country from wastewater treatment facilities to college dormitories. Environmental laboratories have had to quickly adopt new methods and workflows, as well as fill in knowledge gaps.

The virtual Winter 2021 Forum on Laboratory Accreditation was a great venue to host a technical session titled, *"Wastewater Epidemiology and COVID-19"* focused on this topic in the hopes of providing education and opportunities for future discussion and collaboration on this emerging topic. The session was very well attended and included presentations covering analytical techniques used in wastewater analysis and data interpretation and application. The session began with a brief introduction on COVID-19 and wastewater surveillance (also referred to as wastewater-based epidemiology). Raul Gonzalez, from HRSD, kicked off the session by outlining the most used COVID-19 workflows and popular iterations. A discussion of the current HRSD workflow and reasoning behind the specific method choices followed. Jeff Bates and Brian Swalla from IDEXX transitioned to quality control metrics and good lab practices for using Reverse Transcription-quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-qPCR) on wastewater and environmental samples. IDEXX has developed a PCR test that includes all appropriated quality control metrics and standards required. After describing the molecular workflow at Clean Water Services, Blythe Layton described the multitude of COVID-19 research projects underway to address different knowledge gaps. Beyond PCR-based methodologies, Clean Water Services and collaborators have applied next generation sequencing to determine COVID-19 variants in wastewater.

Mark Weir (Ohio State University) concluded the session with modeling efforts underway to use wastewater data to estimate more accurate community infection estimates. He focused on limitations and uncertainty in these models. For anyone interested in reviewing these presentations, they are available on the TNI website here. The networking session later that evening open to conference attendees interested in this topic picked up right where the presentations earlier in the day left off with a discussion on possible approaches to accrediting laboratories for this analysis as well as questions from laboratories interested in developing analytical capability on best workflows and procedures. The 2021 National Environmental Monitoring Conference in August will include two (2) technical sessions, one in person and one virtual, covering additional topics related to this type of monitoring and data application.

There have been many discussions on how to ensure consistency of analysis and data comparability since the COVID-19 pandemic began and environmental laboratories began performing analysis to detect SARS-CoV-2 in the wastewater matrix. Laboratories responded to the need to produce data quickly in response to this pandemic, and therefore have employed many different workflows, analytical techniques, and methods to

meet the need to produce this data. In a goal to achieve data comparability and standardization where possible, ACIL in collaboration with TNI and other stakeholders are developing checklists based on the ISO 17025 standard and currently employed procedures. The key components of these checklists will include:

- Sample Checks
- Subsampling
- Concentration
- Extraction
- Calibration Curve
- Data Reporting
- Training and General Safety

There will be a public comment period for these checklists to ensure they address the key components of this analysis and represent best practices that have been developed by laboratories and method developers. Once finalized they will be available for use to accredit environmental laboratories. Future initiatives may include development of similar materials for the accreditation of environmental laboratories for other molecular analyses.

COVID in Wastewater Monitoring

By David Friedman, ACIL and Patsy Root, IDEXX

There is a tremendous amount of work being conducted in the U.S., Europe, and Australia to track the spread of coronavirus by sampling and analyzing wastewater. Researchers have found that the virus can be detected in untreated wastewater within days of infection and before a person grows ill enough to seek clinical testing or medical care. With the surveillance of wastewater, it is possible to get a glimpse of the curve of probable infections before confirmed cases begin, to ascertain the spread of the disease, and to surveil communities for the prevalence of new strains of the virus.

Monitoring sewage for public health is a relatively inexpensive and reliable tool for officials to track what is happening in communities and institutions (e.g., universities, prisons, long-term care facilities). With this information, officials can take steps to contain infected sub-populations while minimizing the need for general population control measures. Wastewater surveillance can, therefore, serve as a powerful tool for communities in managing SARS-CoV-2 and future such epidemics.

For such a system to become widely adopted, several obstacles must be overcome: the logistics of deploying wastewater surveillance on a massive scale; winning local, state, and federal government buy-in; and ensuring officials and other users can have confidence in the data.

To this end, ACIL is spearheading an effort to expand current environmental laboratory accreditation programs to cover COVID in Wastewater testing by bringing the scientific community together to develop the needed technical standards. Participating in this effort include: Center for Disease Control, Environmental Protection Agency, ACIL member laboratories, Association of Public Health Laboratories, Water Research Foundation, TNI and ACIL member laboratories and vendors.

Building on ISO 17025, the Working Group, under the leadership of Patsy Root of IDEXX, has nearly completed the development of a series of checklists, specific to COVID in Wastewater testing, that assessors and accreditation organizations can use in evaluating the quality system of testing laboratories. The effort encompasses: general considerations, sample checks, calibration, sample pretreatment, virus concentration, extraction, PCR/ddPCR, data reporting, and results interpretation.

Once work on the checklists has been completed it will be publicly available through ACIL and participating stakeholders. Accreditation bodies and laboratories can use the checklist to assure they are following high quality practices for wastewater surveillance. ACIL and the stakeholders have agreed to socialize the checklist and promote the use of accredited laboratories for wastewater surveillance. The objective is to ensure that the data, regardless of the laboratory used, can be relied upon for its accuracy and fit-for-purpose when conducting monitoring operations and when implementing mitigation strategies to best protect public health.

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Spring is Here — Let's Buy Plants!

By Jerry Parr, Parker County Master Gardener

Nurseries and Garden Centers are full of colorful, blooming plants just waiting for someone to grab them and take them home. The temptation is almost irresistible. A lot of us, including Master Gardeners, have done it many times. You buy the plants on impulse, take them home, and there they sit for a month or two until you get in the mood to plant them. Even worse, you may find a likely spot and then watch as the blooms slowly fade away and the plant dies because you purchased a plant that was not suitable for your climate.

Before you yield to this temptation, take a few simple steps that will help ensure greater success in your landscape, and you will end up with plants that will reward you for years to come.

Decide on your landscape goals for a particular area.

What are you trying to achieve? Do you want privacy from the neighbor next door? Would you like a focal point to view from your kitchen window? Do you just want to add some color to a particular area? If so, what color? The outcome from this process should be a general statement that is not specific to a particular plant type. For example, a goal could be to have a border between a path and some existing shrubs.

Think about how large the plant will grow.

How large is the space and how large do you want the plant to be when fully grown? All too often we plant a cute little shrub in a small space not realizing its mature size is 8 feet tall and wide. We then spend all our time trying to control its size, instead of buying a plant that would not grow so large. Take a photograph of the planned space to take with you to the nursery.

Analyze the site.

Is the space in full sun, partial shade or full shade? Does it have a drainage problem? What is the underlying soil? How is this space used? The answers to all these questions will help determine what plant will work best.

Research possible plants.

How can you identify plants that will grow in your area? Most counties in the US have a Master Gardener program managed by the extension office of that county and most of these will have a website with plants that are native or well-adapted to that county. From this research, develop a list of plants you would like to consider. Think about plants you grew up with, at your parents or grandparents, but be open to the fact that that plant may not grow where you live. For example, I remember fondly the camellias and dogwood from my grandmother's house in East Texas. Sadly, those plants will not grow in the alkaline soils of west central Texas.

Learn about the plants that thrive in your county.

What plants can survive your winter weather cold or summer heat? How much supplemental water can you provide? What kind of soil do you have? Learn about hardiness zones. I live in hardiness zone 7, while some neighboring counties are all in zone 8. This means that some plants that can survive a winter in those counties will not do so where I live. And, this year was particularly bad with the long and hard freeze Texas suffered. I lost several plants that I had grown for over 15 years. Make sure any plant you purchase is rated for your zone. Otherwise you will have to spend a lot of time protecting them in the winter. Select plants that are well-adapted to pH of your soil.

Work with your nursery professional.

How can you narrow your choices? Now that you are armed with all this knowledge, go to your local nursery and engage in a conversation with the nursery staff. Do not wander around and pick a plant based on its bloom! Share your thoughts and photos with them and then listen to their suggestions. Many times the plant you thought you wanted is not available and many times new plants have been brought to market. Be open to suggested changes to your preliminary ideas. This is how I discovered both Japanese kerria and Chinese indigo, two plants I had never heard of that are now staples in my landscape.

Buy wisely.

How big a plant should you buy? Develop patience. Our infatuation with instant gratification results in two problems: buying plants that are too large and plants that are in bloom. Purchase the smallest container that you can. A 4-inch lantana will grow to 3 feet in one season. A shrub in a one-gallon pot will get established much quicker than one in a 10-gallon container and in 3-5 years will out-perform the larger plant because it gets established so much quicker. Blooms rob plants of energy that should be going into root growth. Except for annuals, look for plants that have no blooms, and if they do, cut off all blooms when you plant them in order to help them develop roots first. Your goal is to have healthy plant that rewards you with blooms. You may not get any blooms the first year, and that is fine. You will be amply rewarded in the years following.

When selecting a plant, look for one that has good foliage color, a symmetrical, uniform shape and does not have thick roots protruding out of the bottom of the container. If you are buying a plant for its berries (e.g., a possomhaw holly), it is best to buy the plant in the fall and look for one that has berries on it, as only the female plant produces the berries and sometimes nurseries make mistakes.

Take care of your new plants.

Now what? If you have planned well, the space where you want these new plants to go will be ready for them. Once you get them home, you want to get them established quickly, so arrange your schedule to plant them the same day you purchase them. Otherwise, you will need to baby them until you can plant them. Once they are planted, the main thing they need is water. Do not let the roots go dry during the first three weeks. If it makes you feel better, you can apply a slow release fertilizer at the time of planting, but the plant really does not need it yet. So, hold off on fertilizer until you see new leaves appearing on the plant.

Be sure and add mulch around the new plant to help with water conservation and prevent weeds from sprouting. When planting shrubs in large spaces, use some annuals to fill in the first year or two until the shrubs are fully developed. Once established, perennials, shrubs and trees should require very little care in subsequent years.

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Member Spotlight: Dave Speis

By Sharon Mertens, TNI Past-Chair

This past February, the TNI Board of Directors bid a fond farewell to Dave Speis, who retired from the Board. Dave has been a member of the TNI Board of Directors, the INELA Board of Directors before that, a founding member of both of those organizations, active in many other committees and endeavors throughout all of that time, and has certainly left his mark on our industry in many ways.

Dave graduated from Northeastern University (Boston). He started out as a physics major hoping to be a meteorologist but, fortunately for us, switched to chemistry early in his academic career. Through this, he got a co-op position with the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration (FWPCA) in Edison, NJ, where he learned the ins and outs of pesticide and other organic analyses, the fine art of packing chromatography columns and operating GCMS the size of my home furnace today. That was about forty-seven (47) years ago. After his graduation and a short hiatus with Uncle Sam, he returned to work at the same place – only it had been renamed the Environmental Protection Agency, Region II! The people he worked with and projects Dave worked on then are now part of our history and heritage and include Love Canal, Tom's River, and the initial scientists at EPA.

After Dave's time at EPA, he went on to work in the commercial lab sector and held management roles at ETC (Edison, New Jersey), OHM (Findlay, OH), Accutest (Dayton, NJ), & QC Laboratories (Southampton, PA).

Like many working in the environmental field in the early days, Dave saw the progression from research and method development to regulations and requirements from many sources trying to meet the needs of the public, industry, and government. While attempts to standardize and document the quality of the data produced were sorely needed, the systems to do so were fragmented and often contradictory. These were very frustrating times. Dave wanted to see the situation improved and, true to his nature, he jumped in with both feet to do something about it. He attended early NELAC meetings and volunteered to support the efforts of INELA and then TNI. And, in the decades since he made that commitment to help solve the problems, he has made contributions in a variety of ways. Dave was an early contributor to the Field Activities Committee where he was an early Chair, part of the group that developed the accreditation for Non-governmental Accreditation Bodies, a Board Chair of INELA and then TNI, until very recently, following with his role as the TNI Treasurer. He was also a member of the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) and an active contributor to the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL).

While Dave retired from his "day job" a few years ago and is now retiring from active participation on the TNI Board, he's not slowing down by any means. Dave's an avid traveler with recent travels to Majorca, France, Morocco (he surprised us with a picture taken on the back of a camel), and many others. He's an avid sport fisherman, snow skier, and bird watcher, and has logged thousands of miles on his bicycle over the recent years, raising money for various charities in the process. In between all of this "fun stuff", he finds the time and passion to campaign for political candidates. He will not run out of things to do or causes to support!

Member Spotlight: Dave Speis cont.

Dave wanted this article to say that any of the accomplishments that were the result of his ideas or input were because he was blessed to work with a brilliant group of respected friends and colleagues within TNI whose opinions and ideas helped him shape his thoughts to achieve the goals that benefited everyone. He felt he had the freedom to always present his ideas knowing that he would be listened to. Even when the final decision may have been different, he could always accept the consensus of the group. We are much richer for Dave's input and participation. Best wishes always, Dave!

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ChairSpeaks
"Musings from the TNI Chair"

You Are (All) My Types

We all come in some many shapes, sizes, and mental equipment that it would be simpler and easier to think that we are all too different. At the in-depth and microscopic level, that is correct. There is nobody else like you or me. Your fingerprints and genome make patent your individuality. Under the scope, the differences become more notable, even if at a "Big Picture" level, the ocular shows similarities.

This is my bias: I believe we are more alike than dissimilar. At a higher level of perspective, the sameness becomes visible and is the common ground to make change, a prerequisite of cooperation. Our differences inform what we need to incorporate to gain inclusivity, but our sameness gets us the infrastructure. United we stand.

There is value in all modes: individualizing, universalizing, deduction, induction. We tend to choose the channels that are more compatible with our core.

Who are You?

There are so many systems to tell you who you are or are not. The Greeks recognized four temperaments based on the dominance of a specific bodily fluid: more blood made you sanguine, black bile melancholic. We all know about the western zodiac – twelve possibilities organized around four "elements": fire, earth, water, and air. And there are so many others: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Enneagram, the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, the DISC Assessment, the Tarot…

A system I know, Perceptive Communications, pioneered by Bud Erickson and now managed by Erickson and Company (no endorsement or contribution), was the compulsory lingua franca of all Department, where I used to work, employees. It required five peers and oneself to complete an extensive questionnaire that ensured confidentiality. The results were amazing!

I thought I was a benevolent lamb, but my peers perceived me as more than a moderately assertive, read between the lines, terrier (chihuahua?). And it was all there on a set of unambiguous quantitative graphs.

Many years later, I retook the assessment. Time had not changed my fundamental communication style, but my perception of the "real" me was closer to how my peers perceived me. (Progress? Arf!)

Erickson

In the Perceptive Communications model there are four, that number again, fundamental communication styles: controller, advocate, analyzer, and facilitator. The model also recognizes hybrids, communicators that exhibit two styles sequentially consistently. Here is a brief and oversimplified description of my own of each type that will give you a taste:

Controller
Wants action, prefers direct brief communication, more interested in the bottom line that the path to it. They say: "Let's get it done".

Advocate
Loves adventure and change. Likes discussion. Excitable and loquacious. They say: "Let's talk and talk about it".

Analyzer
Is precise, accurate, reserved. Values data and being corroboratively right. They say: "Let's think about it more before we talk or get it done".

Facilitator
Values relationship, harmony, and prolonged stability. They say: "Let's make sure we are all comfortable with it".

None of us can be completely described by one of four possible labels, but groupings based on sameness can help us navigate the seas of possibility. Tools are means, not ends; shapers, not creators.

There is no perfect style and greatness and leadership can come from any profile. We can exhibit attributes of any of these styles at one time, but we always have a predominant preferred mode of communicating and dealing with information. Hybrids use one or another mode interchangeably, but not both at the same time. There is always a predominant path of expression.

Who is TNI?

All organizations have their ethos, so at some level it is justifiable to refer to them as who. I think the Institute predominantly attracts analysts and facilitators. That fits our mission and business model. We are careful drafters of standards that must withstand challenges, be auditable and measurable – analyzer traits. We make decisions by consensus and in our expert committees we require balance, as in lack of dominance, so we seek buy-in – facilitator attributes.

These pluses come with some minuses. We are not sufficiently nimble to produce quickly. Creating standards worth their name makes us value certainty over innovation. Getting acceptance by varied stakeholders diminishes momentum and, lest we risk the failure of having a perfect product that nobody buys, makes us err on the conventional.

Anything Here for Us?

We start with ourselves.

Get out of your comfort zone! Go out dancing wildly if you are an analyst. Listen carefully and intently if you are an advocate. Develop a tolerance for complexity if you are a controller. Think more about you first if you are a facilitator. This not only will make you grow as a person, but it will also further your ability to understand others and deal more effectively with them. Pretend you are someone else for a bit. See how others react. Feel and learn.

And as for TNI…

Let us think about how we fill in committee vacancies and leadership positions. Let's recognize differences not to emphasize them, but to promote understanding and tolerance. Mine those differences to strengthen the organization. If we were all the same, what a boring place this would be! Opposites attract?

Difference, when dealt with correctly, sparks curiosity, leads to innovation and, if successful, becomes the norm and ceases to be an outlier. As we move our organization through this decade, let's keep that in mind, and strive for inclusivity and diversity, not for the mere sake of it, but for the richness it can bring, the vistas we have yet to glance at, and to help us keep our organization true to its mission as we acknowledge the inevitability of change.

Only connect.

Alfredo

Alfredo Sotomayor
TNI Chair