

President's Memo

Journey to the Center of ACI



Kenneth C. Hover,
ACI President

The honor of serving as your President has dramatically widened my view and personal understanding of our organization. Thirty years ago, my perception of ACI was based entirely on the activities of and my circle of friends in the Greater Miami Valley Chapter in Cincinnati, OH. That view was generally confirmed when I moved to Ithaca and joined the Central New York Chapter in Syracuse. For me, ACI existed primarily

as a confederation of local chapters (with some group in Detroit, MI, that collected dues, wrote rules, printed books and magazines, and provided seminar speakers).

Then Dick White and Peter Gergely encouraged me to attend conventions, and Dick Kriner and Boyd Ringo got me into committees, and before I knew it, my ACI world centered on Committees 308 and E903. Those committees were my home in ACI with folks who shared my interests and ideas, and other folks who saw things differently. I learned new things that reinforced or challenged my concrete world view and took great pride in our finished products. I came to believe that ACI revolved around my committees like the pre-Copernican sun revolved around the earth. Service on the Board, many other committees, and the Executive Committee has since shown me that ACI does not revolve around Chapters, Boards, Committees (Executive or otherwise), or professional staff. I have concluded that ACI is “member-centric,” where each member’s influence is proportional to their participation.

We participate knowing that we may or may not prevail in a key debate at one meeting or on one ballot, but with perseverance and continued “showing up” we will make a difference. And we keep on coming back because we believe in ACI’s mission to “Advance Concrete Knowledge,” we’re passionate about improving our products and our industry, and we enjoy fellowship with folks who share the same goals.

In ACI, members bring issues, set priorities, and move toward consensus by asking the questions and debating the answers. The continual evolution of our documents proves that consensus is not a permanent position cast in concrete (sorry). (An ACI document is like a building that is constantly

under renovation and being improved, enlarged, or made more efficient.) Consensus is the name we give to a patch of solid common ground or floor space we can all agree to stand on while we’re looking for improvements. Our chapters and committees are the job sites where consensus-building happens and, as a result, many of us are fiercely proud to have a past or present affiliation with those specific groups.

Member faithfulness to ACI’s parts is one of the “pastes” that holds the larger Institute together, and those of us temporarily entrusted with limited control over ACI’s affairs need to recognize and encourage the motivational power of member allegiance to chapters and committees. After all, in the final analysis, it is members keeping faith with each other that gets a chapter through the challenges of hosting a convention or certification event and gets a committee through that last “push” to finish an “ACI-quality” document. Group loyalty brings camaraderie, mutual support, and the focus required to get the work done.

But just as in any large organization, loyalty and allegiance to smaller groups within can lead to feelings of “Us” versus “Them.” The “Us” is usually the subgroup that has banded together to contribute their time, energy, interest, and expertise to make needed improvements or advances. In our case, “Them” is usually another subgroup of ACI volunteer members with a different perspective on the issue. In ACI, everybody is “one of us” to somebody and “one of them” to somebody else! But the good news is that ACI is small enough and communication is easy enough that we can reach out to each other, debate our differences, and find common ground using our consensus process that guarantees that everybody has a voice.

Early in the year is a good time to remind ourselves that members are at the center of ACI. We members nominate the officers, populate the Board of Direction, and empower them to monitor our procedures and bylaws. We members constitute our committees and chapters, and we make things happen. For that reason, I want to thank all of you for your participation, perseverance, and faithfulness. For those thinking that 2012 might be the year to get involved, please do so! For those already involved, please continue and welcome new members around the table. Remember, we are ACI—and that includes all of them and all of us!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Hover". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kenneth C. Hover