

## The MSA Placement Office

John H.L. Watson

The editor of *Microscopy Today* has asked me to write an article which describes the Placement Office of the Microscopy Society of America, and I have accepted this opportunity to bring the history and operation of the Office to the attention of his readers. In what follows, the word "Candidate" refers to a member of MSA who is in good standing and who has registered appropriately with the Placement Office as actively seeking a position or a change, and "Employer" refers to institutions or companies who have registered with the Office as having a position open.

When the Society was very young in the 1940's, the late Perry Smith of RCA, who was Society President in 1948, was operating for EMSA what was then referred to as the Employment Referral Bureau. In those days, RCA was selling many electron microscopes and it was a natural activity for the Company and its people to find and encourage personnel to operate those instruments. In 1953 Perry asked to be relieved of Referral Bureau duties and I succeeded him for 1954-1955, with what was then renamed the EMSA Placement Service.

Somewhere along the line, in the 1960's, Council objected to the use of the word "Service", (non-profit Societies such as EMSA were not supposed to provide service to their members), and the Placement Service then became the EMSA Statistical Office, which title it bore until 1990. I did not rebel against this change because while the operation remained the same, I felt it more prestigious anyway, to be considered a statistician than a mere "servicer". In 1990, when Council felt that "Statistical Office" did not adequately describe the nature of the activity, the title was changed again, this time to the Placement Office. I thus remained an Officer of the Society but lost the statistician's prestige.

However, during the statistical period, I did carry out four salary surveys of the membership, which gave some credence to the title. The data from these surveys, including those of the fourth survey in 1989, was published in

the EMSA Bulletin, Fall 1990, Vol. 20, No. 2, P. 113-120. Requests are still received for salary data but the 1989 data is now sadly out-of-date. My only present suggestion to correspondents on this subject is that they should extrapolate the 1989 data for their own case to the conditions of 1995. It is doubtful that I shall find time or energy to do a fifth survey, but perhaps the Society can be so convinced.

As a result of this long history, the Society now has an operating Placement Office instead of a Bureau, or a Service or a Statistical Office. The *modus operandi* of the Placement Office, established originally in 1954, has remained essentially the same under the variety of titles. The procedures continue to work well, are of minimum toil to the Officer and complaints from members have been few and far between. An occasional complaint is from Candidates who wish to receive Employer data more rapidly. The following description of procedures may explain why there sometimes is some delay.

When the Office is contacted, a letter of explanation with a form to be filled out, is sent to each Candidate or Employer who calls or writes. The information received from Candidates is typed, duplicated and mailed to potential Employers and data from Employers is similarly handled and sent to Candidates. It is usual to delay the mailings until ten or twelve candidates, or until at least two Employers are listed. In any case, each Candidate receives data on already listed Employers by return mail and Employers are serviced with Candidate information likewise. Some Candidates (and some Employers on occasion) will request confidence, in which case the confidential party receives information but is not identified. In order to receive the current information, the Candidates must be members of MSA in good standing or be able to show that they have applied properly for MSA membership. To receive information on Candidates, Employers remit \$100 to the Society via the Officer for each job opening listed. Further contact and negotiation are the responsibilities of the Candidates and Employers involved.

The data on both Employers and Candidates are circulated by means of a master list, issued in September of each year following the annual meeting and by addenda issued over the year as information becomes available. In addition, the Employers received one appearance in the *MSA Journal* and are posted during the days of the annual meeting. The non-confidential Candidates are also posted during the meeting but do not appear in the *Journal*.

During some of the early years of the Society and of electron microscopy when the number of positions open outnumbered the number of Candidates, it was possible to issue Employer addenda fairly frequently, but lately with the situation reversed, fewer Employer addenda have been issued at longer intervals. On average, the master list and five addenda are issued each year to both Employers and Candidates.

Both Candidates and Employers are asked to inform the Office as soon as they no longer require the data. This simple request is frequently ignored particularly by Candidates! However, every attempt is made to keep the data current. With this in mind, an annual inventory of both Candidates and Employers is carried out just prior to the annual meeting. Any Candidate or Employer who does not respond to this inventory is assumed to need Placement Office data no longer and is dropped from the active files.

Over the years the percentage (about 2%) of MSA membership represented in the files of the Office have mirrored changes which have occurred among the total membership of the Society in both the training of Candidates and the emphasis asked for by Employers of microscopists. Early on, the Employers were mostly biological-medical and the Candidates were likewise biologically trained, but slowly this has changed until the physical-chemical side is stressed as much or more among both Candidates and Employers as the biological. Also where once the Office was used predominantly by technologists and those seeking to employ technical people, the number of those with Ph.D's using the Office and the numbers of Employers asking for those with the advanced degree have risen markedly.

For the future, I would like to continue with the Office I have held for so long a time. It allows me, in retirement, to keep some contact with the scientists and science with which I have been associated for these many years. At New Orleans in 1994, the then Society President, Robert Cardell, informed me, tongue-in-cheek, that as MSA Placement Officer I had "tenure"! After 41 years he may be correct! I expect and hope that needy MSA members and Institutions may have to continue to correspond with me for some years to come. ■

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**Short Course on Image Analysis**  
(Imanalco 95). John Keith Beddow: Tel/Fax  
(319)337-2474
- ✓ Sept 26/Oct 2 '95: **14th International EM Congress.** Cancun, Mexico. Miguel Jose Yacaman: 525-570-85-03 Fax: 525-570-85-03
- ✓ Sept 26/30 '95: **OIM Academy - EBSP & Orientation Imaging Microscopy.** (TSL, Inc.). Provo, Utah. David Dingley: Tel: (801)344-8990, Fax: (801)344-8997.
- ✓ Sept 29/Oct 1 '95: **Symposium on Integrated Microscopy.** (Integrated Microscopy Resource, U of WI). Madison, WI. IMR, Univ. of WI, 1675 Observatory Drive, Madison, WI 53706. imradmin@calshp.cals.wisc.edu
- ✓ Sept 29/Oct 1 '95: **14th Annual Advances in Microscopy Symposium "Microscopy Outreach: Conveying its Science, Art & Technology"** (NCSMMA) Wrightsville, NC. Peter Ingram: (919)541-6598, Fax: (919)681-8419, ingram@rti.org
- ✓ Sept 29/Oct 1 '95: **First Annual Symposium on Integrated Microscopy.** Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison. imradin@calshp.cals.wisc.edu
- ✓ Oct 4 '95: **Short Course on Image Analysis** (Imanalco). San Francisco, CA. Tel./Fax: (319)337-2474.
- ✓ Oct 4/5 '95: **International Seminar on Quantitative Microscopy.** Braunschweig, Germany. H. Geuther: Fax: 49 531 592 4015, heinrich.geuther@ptb.de
- ✓ Oct 5 '95: **CCD Imaging Workshop** (Photometrics) Tucson, AZ. Lisa Soroka: (520)889-9933, Fax: (520)295-0299.
- ✓ Oct 9/13 '95: **Scanning Electron Microscopy and X-Ray Microanalysis for the Materials Scientist.** (SUNY - Inst. of Materials Science). New Paltz, NY. Dr. A.V. Patsis: Tel.: (914)257-3800, Fax: (914)255-0978.
- ✓ Oct 12/14 '95: **Great Lakes Microscopy Conference '95.** (GLEMA) Toledo, OH. Dr. Carol Heckman: (419)372-8218
- ✓ Oct 16/20 '95: **AVS Annual National Symposium.** Minneapolis, MN. Tel.: (212)248-0200, Fax: (212)248-0245.
- ✓ Oct 17/20 '95: **Scanning Electron Microscopy and X-Ray Microanalysis for the Material Scientists.** (SUNY) New Paltz, NY (914)255-0757, Fax: (914)255-0978
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- ✓ Oct 24/27 '95: **Ultramicrotomy in Materials Science** (RMC and Univ. of Arizona). Tucson, AZ. Bob Chiovetti: (520)889-7900, Fax: (520)741-2200.
- ✓ Oct 25/Nov 1 '95: **Optical Microscopy and Imaging in the Biomedical Sciences** (Marine Biology Lab). Woods Hole, MA. (508)548-3705, eMail: admissions@mbl.edu.
- ✓ Nov 10/11 '95: **Tripod Polisher Workshop** (South Bay Technology). San Clemente, CA. (800)SBT-2233, Fax: (714)492-1499.
- ✓ Nov 15 '95: **23rd Scottish Microscopy Symposium.** Edinburgh, Scotland. Stephan Helfer: 0131 552-7171, Fax: 0131 552-0382, Stephan@rbge.org.uk
- ✓ Nov 28/Dec 1 '95: **34th Annual Conference of the Electron Microscopy Society of Southern Africa (EMSSA '95).** Prof. Mike Lee, EM Unit, Univ. of the North, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga 0727, South Africa. email: qemssa95@uninl.north.ac.za
- ✓ 5/9 Feb '96: **14th Australian Conference on Electron Microscopy (ACEM-14) & 1st Meeting of the International Union of Microbeam Analysis Societies (IUMAS).** Sydney, Australia. Maret Vesk: 61-2-351-2351, Fax: 61-2-552-1967, eMail: maret@emu.su.oz.au
- ✓ 3/8 March '96: **Pittcon '96.** Chicago, IL (412)825-3220, Fax: (412)825-3224.
- ✓ March 18/22 & March 25/29 '96: **Practical Aspects of Scanning Electron Microscopy (PASEM 96).** (Univ of MD). Tim Mangel: (301)405-6896, Fax: (301)314-9358.
- ✓ 9/12 April '96: **SCANNING '96.** (Foundation for Advances in Medicine and Science, Inc.) Monterey, CA. Mary K. Sullivan: ((201)818-1010, Fax: (201)818-0086, eMail: fams@holonet.net
- ✓ July 2/4 '96: **MICRO '96 (RMS),** London, U.K. 44 1865 248768, Fax: 44 1865 791237
- ✓ 14/19 July '96: **43rd International Field Emission Symposium.** Moscow, Russia. Prof. Alesander L. Suvorov: (095)125 96 91/(095)125 34 39, Fax: (095)34 39, eMail: suvorov@cl.itcp.ru
- ✓ Aug '96: **6th Asia-Pacific Conference on Electron Microscopy, APEM 6.** Hong Kong. Dr. E.C. Chew: 852 609 6845, Fax: 852 603 5031.
- ✓ 8/17 August '96: **17th Congress and General Assembly of the International Union for Crystallography.** Seattle, WA. Prof. R.F. Bryan, Univ of VA.
- ✓ 11/15 August '96: **MSA/MAS/MSC Joint Annual Meeting.** Minneapolis, MN MSA Business Office: (508)540-5594/(800)538-3672, Fax: (508)548-9053.
- ✓ 26/30 August '96: **EUREM '96.** University College, Dublin, Ireland. Prof. Martin Steer: 353-1-7062254

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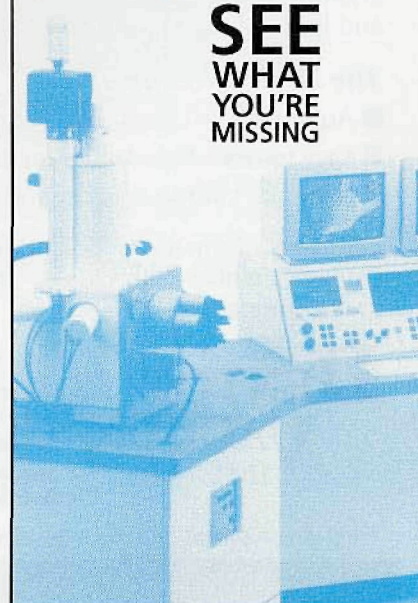
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## In Praise Of The Hour

Al Soeldner, Oregon State University

Years ago electron microscopes usually had an hour meter as a standard part of the instrument. Unfortunately hour meters have been eliminated from many modern scopes and are not even readily available as an option from most microscope manufacturers.

An hour meter is a very useful device. Every microscope I've owned or supervised has had an hour meter that was factory installed, added by helpful field service persons, or that I installed myself. Few of us would enthusiastically buy a car without an odometer; why should we want an electron microscope without an hour meter?

If supplying an hour meter on an electron microscope costs too much in production time or money, certainly it would take only minimal effort at the design stage to plan a connection point or plug to operate a clock as an ancillary part of an appropriate circuit. The actual meter and connective wiring could be sold as an option. I'd gladly pay a third to a half kilodollars for this small utility on my electron microscopes.

Why is an hour meter so handy? First, in managing a service which pays maintenance contract and related operating costs from beam hour charges invoiced to instrument users, an hour meter is the only accurate, impartial way to track consumed time for billing purposes. But beyond being a convenient mechanism on which to base charges, an hour meter is a powerful asset in other kinds of management and documentation situations.

When training operators an hour meter allows an instructor to accurately monitor instrument usage for both instructional and student practice needs. It is then possible to quantify more precisely the impact of instructional programs on research or other primary use activity, predict times needed for different sorts of instruction, evaluate average times required by students to master various procedures, and make more definitive scheduling arrangements.

For potential clients who are preparing work proposals, estimating time (and hence, microscope and labor charges) required for various kinds of projects - studies requiring simple imaging, EBIC images, microdiffraction, or element distribution maps, for example - is much more realistic when documentation of actual beam hour consumption by similar work can be used to refine an educated guess or other imprecise assumption.

Company owners, agency administrators, supervisors, and operations managers often need factual data, backed by solid documentation, about things like instrument use by individuals, groups, departments, or projects, time allocations relative to specified kinds of activities, operating times between failures, or the expected service life on an instrument or component part. An instrument's hour meter in combination with the instrument log book, service log, and work sheet records provide the accurate information base and solid documentation necessary to answer those questions. An hour meter is the only means by which information of this type may be accurately and definitively quantified. Viewed in terms of justifying financial or political support for new, sustained, or reduced equipment acquisitions, staffing levels and/or laboratory operations, documentation based on a trustworthy and impartial standard such as an hour meter is of extraordinarily high value.

An hour meter is also essential for maintenance and performance assurance purposes. Accurately measuring the time used for, and time elapsed since service and/or performance check and calibration procedures is an ideal way to track performance and schedule appropriate or consistent tune-up intervals. An hour meter allows both the exact and average hours of operation on critical components like filaments, scintillators, phosphor screens, CRTs, and apertures to be precisely quantified. Having an objective way to measure mean operating time between failures or specific type of malfunctions is helpful in troubleshooting, evaluating progress toward solid repairs, predicting when preventative action might be taken most effectively, or in the determination of a legal aspect of a warranty or maintenance agreement.

An hour meter on an electron microscope serves much the same function as the odometer on a car. Both are tools which let us precisely measure use, monitor operating characteristics relative to use, schedule appropriate and timely maintenance, provide a basis for accurate records, and impartially quantify use when there may be a legal purpose to do so. An hour meter, anyone?