ASA President’s Message

Take a Couple of Communities for a ‘Test Drive’

Going out to buy a new car is quite an experience. The smell, the feel, no goo on the seats—and the CHOICES! I remember going from dealership to dealership, looking for the perfect car. I test-drove the Z-series, the M-series, the convertibles, the tanks, and finally settled on an affordable, somewhat sporty, car with lots of drink holders. The best thing about test drives is that you can get the feel of the car and not commit until you’re sure that it’s the right one for you (and even then, you can trade it in). The ASA Community structure is set up to be “test-driven” for you pick and choose the right match(es) for you and your research interests.

Some graduate students attending last year’s Annual Meetings told a staff member that they had not yet joined any of the ASA Communities for several reasons. First, they felt like they weren’t yet ready to commit to a Community. Second, they thought that because they were “only” graduate students, they didn’t have the expertise that was somehow implied in the joining of said Communities. And third, they had a variety of interests, and they had not yet decided where their career was going, so they didn’t want to focus too narrowly on any one Community.

After further discussion, several of us encouraged them to take a look at the list of Communities and take a few for a test drive. You don’t have to be an expert to join a Community, and you are welcome to join as many as you would like. Even better, you can make changes throughout the year as your interests change. Any member can join any of the 41 ASA Communities, whether you are an undergraduate, graduate student, post-doc, early career, international, professional, or emeritus member, chances are we have a Community or two (or 10) for you!

Since one of the purposes of ASA Communities is to funnel information about the discipline to you, the more Communities you have in your arsenal, the better off you will be as far as being informed of programs at the Annual Meetings, colleagues with similar interests, research in this discipline, papers being published in the Society journals, books being written, and all kinds of other opportunities. Communities communicate with their members through an email list-serv, a webpage, and at the Annual Meetings through paper sessions and a business meeting.

Selecting your Communities is fairly simple and straightforward. Just visit the “My ASA Communities” link at: www.agronomy.org/account/communities/asa. For each Community you join, you will automatically be signed up for the list-serv emails from that Community. We also suggest regularly visiting the Community webpages at www.agronomy.org/membership/communities and take part in the Section and Community business meetings at the Annual Meetings as well as their oral sessions, symposia, contests, and poster sessions.

If you feel that the established Communities do not support your interests, you may want to start a new one. Instructions are available at www.agronomy.org/membership/communities/transition.

So take one or more Communities for a ‘test-drive’ this summer and check out their activities on the web and at the Tampa meeting. Here’s a tip when you get down to negotiating for that new car. Take along a 2 year old about mid-afternoon, provide a sucker (almost any size will be good), and let them look and wander around all the new cars in the showroom. The salesperson will get to the best deal fairly quickly. Happy driving! If you have any comments or questions, please contact me at Sharon.Clay@sdstate.edu.

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