



THE INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Around the world in right of way

I remember when Past International President Mary Anne Marr, SR/WA, rolled out IRWA's mission statement, which resonated with me: "We improve people's quality of life through infrastructure development." Active in our utility and energy industry for over 30 years, I have been attending the conference since 2005. Conferences consist of classes and collaboration with many global specialists who are in a league of their own on the world stage. The annual conference provides a space to share best practices — whether it is connecting with a colleague in the hallway, attending a formal session or sitting next to an attendee at lunch and finding common ground.

Collaboration on the International Relations Committee involves interaction with global leaders across many fields. These are members at the pinnacle of their professional careers; they're masked by the proliferation of activities and events we have at conference.

Such was the case earlier this year in Long Beach. We listened to speakers share their knowledge at roundtable events. John Sturgeon, an eight-time attendee from Australia and PEAK (CLIMB) instructor, brought his entire company over and led us through best practices in public and private infrastructure projects. You'll read more about John's experience in this issue.

In continued collaboration, several attendees were guests at the Compulsory Purchase Association's (CPA) event in February in London. There, we continued with the trans-global sharing of knowledge. IRWA's own Meyric Lewis KC, shared many initiatives at conference this year, including the United Kingdom's mental health awareness studies of both members of CPA and the public. They presented a session on how professionals have addressed labor shortages in the skilled workforce by fostering a greater understanding in diversity, equity and inclusion.

César Cantu, who frequently presents to IRWA, brought Robert Vincent from the Pan-American Union of Valuation Associations (UPAV), a membership body of thousands who share our cross-disciplines of valuation and appraisal across the Americas. Many of us know César, who for years has attended conference, instructed courses and supported our industry professionals in many Latin American countries.

Another world-class presenter, O'Gorman&Hagerman, a prestigious law firm in Mexico, brought a stunning case study about the Tijuana Viaduct project, which you can read more in this issue. It was evident that the O'Gorman team had studied their populace. They had been vested and embedded and overcame insurmountable obstacles to deliver their objective on the much-needed project. They utilized knowledge of the social ecology of the community to build credibility, rapport and trust in a very challenging geographical proximity to the U.S./California border.

Lessons learned often come from unexpected places. I used to grab my highlighter and look for sessions in my field of expertise to get an update or to hear from someone who had 40 years in the industry, for example, and find experts to reach beyond my own years of experience. But over time, I have found that the kernels of wisdom may come at lunch, in a recommended book or in a case study on soft skills in circumstances in while dealing with a challenging landowner.

Recently, I was speaking with a human resources professional who works in another industry, and she asked me what ROW meant. To her, and to many other professionals outside our industry, it means "Rest of World." When they are shaping a project outside of North America or a specific focus area, they use this language as a way to categorize everything that isn't being directly discussed. Learning this, I will never think of ROW in the same terminology specific to our industry. ROW has a broader, more expansive, global significance.

In thinking the Rest Of World classification in our industries, the extensive knowledge bases of our international affiliates also come together in one space. Each country has their own unique challenges, and as such, we learn from how they adapt solutions to these challenges. Best practices may differ throughout our global regional continuum, as defined in Tom Everitt's article on the renewables market's approaches to negotiation. It seems the approaches apply everywhere. Likewise, Gord MacNair's article on expropriation in Canada distinguishes relocation in its terminology that has crossover into global relocations. The world becomes infinitesimally small when you embrace how these grand ideas can be implemented in your hometown projects.

I now often gravitate to someone who has different thoughts from my own. Such is what happens at conference — expect the unexpected. Navigating through our own uncharted waters, we learn to expect the unknown. We relish these international touchpoints at conference, or on calls or emails. Whether water, sewer, economic growth, utilities, road, bridges or energy infrastructure, we improve people's lives as our mission and our international members broaden that perspective even more.

I welcome the readers to visualize some of these industry professionals at work in their respective countries, from U.K. to Australia, Canada to Mexico, whether appraisers, barristers, attorney/ negotiators or negotiation professionals. Conference provides us the gift to choose from the diversity of knowledge among our colleagues who represent every continent except Antarctica unique to their discipline or time zones.

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