

# Pulses



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## CONVERSATIONS

# OSA Celebrates 100 Years Q&A with Chris Dainty

**J. Christopher Dainty**, 2011 President of OSA and chair of the OSA Centennial Advisory Panel, talks with *Optics & Photonics News* about his history with the society and what the panel hopes to accomplish this year.

**Q.** Before we talk about the Centennial, maybe just a word or two about OSA's recent development. During your 2011 term as OSA President, your focus included continuing globalization of the Society, supporting optics students, and building industry connections. How have these platforms evolved?

OSA's support of students has been an everlasting activity, certainly over the past 20 years and probably since the founding of OSA in 1916. Two particular initiatives come to mind, the growth of student chapters and the International OSA Network of Students (IONS) Conferences. We now

have more than 350 student chapters in 60 countries—and many of them are actively engaged in education outreach to high-school kids. They also organize events for their own professional development and host travelling lecturers.

The first IONS conference was held in 2007 in Barcelona, Spain, and was attended by 15 students from four institutions. In 2015, IONS conferences were held in Germany, the United States, China, Spain, Tunisia, Mexico and New Zealand, and attended by hundreds of students from all around the world. Based on my own participation in IONS conferences, I know that these are outstanding events that

combine the highest technical standards with enjoyable social events.

The “globalization” of OSA has also been evident since the founding of OSA but took on a new emphasis in the mid-2000s with the support of the OSA Board of Directors, and certainly was a major focus for me during my year as President. Around that time, the non-U.S. membership of OSA surpassed 50 percent for the first time. And as of 2016, more than 60 percent of OSA’s journal editors, as well as 60 percent of the Fellows elected for the year, are from outside North America. As an international society, OSA has needed to provide a higher level of service to its international community. We have greatly increased our international activities, especially in China, India and South America.

Regarding industry connections, OSA has always had close ties to industry—a large share of its founders and early members were industry based. In recent years we’ve increased our commitment to provide services for industry members and opportunities for involvement in OSA leadership for industry people. We have managed the OSA Industry Development Associates (OIDA) since 2011 and provide OIDA members with exclusive market data on the optics and photonics industry.

**Q.** OK—let’s discuss your role as chair of the OSA Centennial Advisory Panel (CAP). How did you get involved with CAP, and why did you take on this extra responsibility?

First, I was pleased to be a part of this once-in-a-lifetime celebration and second, I wanted to ensure that the Centennial is a truly international affair that reflects our future as much as our past. Every member of CAP feels that our actions should have a legacy, and



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—Chris Dainty,  
OSA 2011 President,  
Centennial Advisory Panel Chair

that we should also enjoy the moment of our 100<sup>th</sup> year. Many of the activities we are undertaking in 2016 are an investment in OSA’s future, and in giving back to the optics and photonics community that has done so much to solve problems and improve life.

**Q.** In addition to Centennial celebrations and receptions, what does CAP hope to accomplish through 2016?

The overall theme of the Centennial is Reflecting a Century of Innovation, and within that theme we have four sub-themes: Capture the Legacy; Connect with Members; Light the Future; and Spark Inspiration. The first thing that comes to mind when celebrating 100 years of OSA is to reflect on the history—both

of optics and the Society—and we are doing that through two books which will be free online and distributed in print at selected events. The first book will cover progress in optics over the past 100 years and will be ready by early February. The second book will be on the history of the Society and will be distributed in October at the Frontiers in Optics/Laser Science (FiO/LS) meeting in Rochester, N.Y., USA.

The past is important, but the real emphasis of the Centennial is to focus on OSA’s future, in particular, our students and young professionals. We have increased the number of student grants in 2016, doubled the Travelling Lecturer program, and launched a new Ambassador program as part of the OSA Young Professionals program. OSA Student Chapters were at the forefront of outreach during the 2015 International Year of Light and their outreach activities will continue to be strongly supported in 2016.

*Optics & Photonics News* will publish four quarterly booklets reflecting the sub-themes of the Centennial. A new OSA 100 microsite has been launched at [www.osa.org/100](http://www.osa.org/100) and is packed full of content, including an interactive timeline and hundreds of Centennial Authentic Moment videos, which are three-minute cameos of our members. We have created an OSA 100 travelling exhibit that will be featured at many of our meetings in 2016. We also have a special speaker series called “Light the Future” that will be held at FiO/LS, Optical Fiber Communication Conference and Exhibition, Conference on Lasers and Electro-Optics, and meetings in South America, China, India and Germany.

This is just a sample of the action planned for 2016, in addition to our big

celebration at FiO/LS in Rochester ... which should not be missed!

**Q.** What do you think is the most underappreciated event or historical figure in OSA's 100-year history?

I'm not sure that "underappreciated" is exactly the right term, but it is little-known that the first President of OSA, Perley G. Nutting, made a number of important contributions to the theory of photographic recording, including his derivation of the "Nutting formula." This formula related the optical density of film to the average number and area of randomly distributed developed silver grains. My own undergraduate training was in photographic technology, and this equation was the basis of my final-year project. This project

started my interest in research, which led to me earning an M.S. in applied optics and a Ph.D. at Imperial College London.

**Q.** Is there a specific OSA Centennial event or publication you are most looking forward to this year?

I'm looking forward to everything this year! Most of all, the members of CAP want the initiatives we are launching in 2016 to be a springboard for the next 100 years, both for OSA and for the entire optics and photonics community. **OPN**

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## OSA Centennial Advisory Panel Members

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