



Conferences, Workshops & Symposia

NASA STORYTELLERS ENGAGE, ENCOURAGE, REFLECT

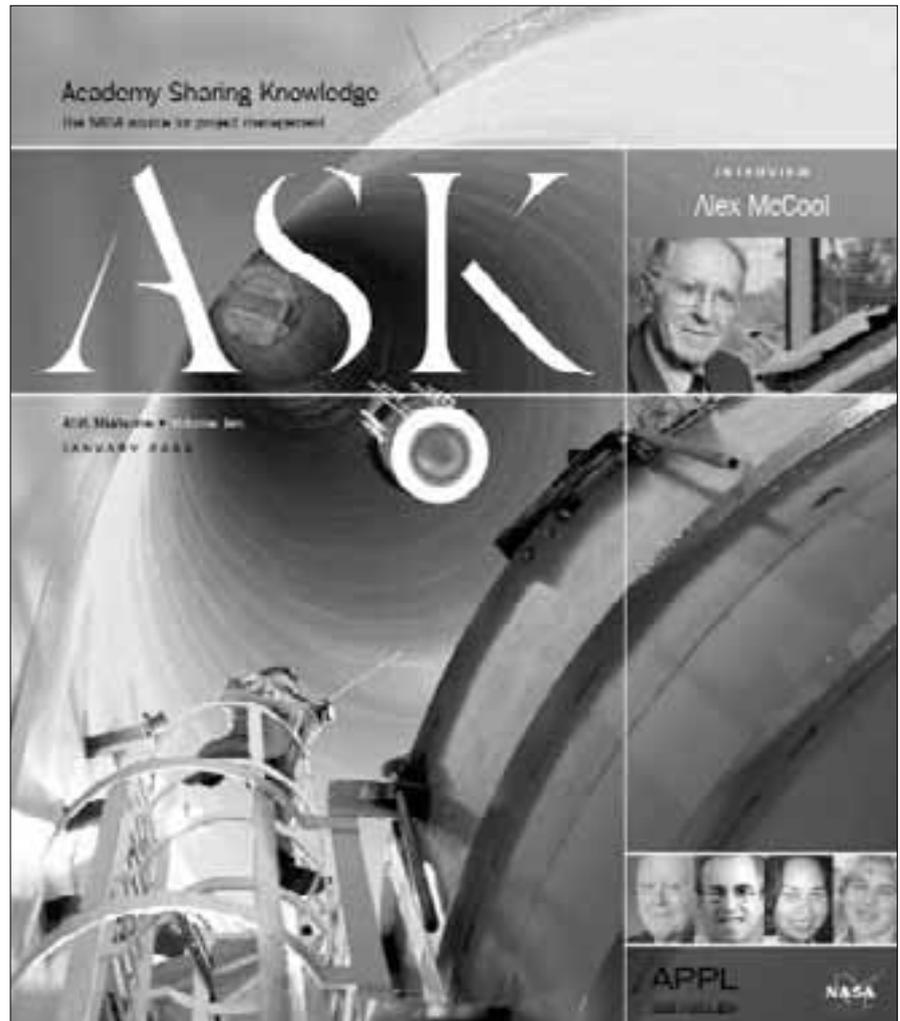
Maj. Dan Ward, USAF

I recently had the opportunity to participate in a Masters Forum of program managers, sponsored by NASA's Academy of Program and Project Leadership (APPL). The three-day conference was amazing and enlightening and left my head spinning for days. This is a brief story of some of what I saw, heard, and learned during my time with these spacemen and women.

The first thing that struck me was how deeply cool NASA's mission is. It's all about discovery, exploration, and adventure. Seriously, how many government agencies (or any endeavor at all) can you name that use the word "adventure" in their vision statement, not just their marketing and recruiting materials? I very much wanted to be a part of it.

Next, it was quickly obvious NASA does acquisition, technology development, and program management a little differently from the Department of Defense. That basically means we make different mistakes, so there's probably a lot we can learn from each other. We've each figured out ways around certain pitfalls that the other hasn't yet. Sounds like a ripe field for collaboration and cooperation to me.

As the conference progressed, technology developers from NASA and the DoD began to sound more and more alike. NASA PMs and their teams wrestle with many of the same issues—micromanagement, fear, bureaucracy, funding instability, requirements creep, and the like—that all too often plague the DoD. Even on a technical side, we share some similar challenges. If you think Afghanistan is a low-bandwidth environment, check out Mars. If you think target ID and engagement is tough in Iraq, try doing it from more than 750 million miles away. In one recent example, NASA hit Saturn's moon Titan



with their Huygens probe, which was zipping along at 12,400 mph (and experienced 16 Gs of deceleration, by the way). There's a reason they call it rocket science.

Once Upon A Time

My big take-away from the Masters Forum (aside from the autographed photos of astronaut Paul Richards for my kids) is the power of stories. In the 18th century, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, wrote (reputedly quoting the Earl of Cromarty), "I knew a very wise man that believed that ... if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation." Stories, like ballads (which are, after all, stories in rhyme) carry power. In recognition of this fact, APPL uses stories as their chief knowledge transfer method—the mechanism these program leaders use to shape and define



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their culture and to pass along lessons to the younger generation. Quite frankly, the process of writing the stories is often how they discover lessons in the first place.

The storytellers at the Masters Forum don't offer "best practices" for imitation, but instead share "practices" for reflection and encouragement. They are more *descriptive* than *proscriptive*, and they understand that adult education is more about drawing out than stuffing in. NASA's storytelling is an engaging, memorable, often amusing approach. It is powerfully effective, and I would love to see DoD practitioners follow suit.

One presenter spun a fascinating yarn about the trials and tribulations involved with fabricating a uniquely designed metal canister for a space experiment. His little cylindrical box was not as sexy as some of the more high-tech gizmos NASA is known for producing, but his story kept us riveted, laughing, listening, and cheering him on. He didn't use a single PowerPoint chart, relying instead on an actual sample canister that he turned over and over in his hands as he spoke. The principles he gently shared with us were both personal and universal, and they cut to the core of how people relate to each other. There's no way I could do his story justice in this article, but I assure you I won't soon forget him.

His presentation (and the others like it) demonstrated that stories are more convincing and enlightening than traditional academic approaches. They capture and present values and priorities, rather than just numbers and charts. They are, in fact, the ideal medium for passing along the accumulated wisdom of "the tribe" to the other members. APPL's objective is to develop "reflective practitioners"—people who take the time to evaluate and learn from their experiences and the experiences of the people around them. Taking some time out of the day to listen to thoughtfully crafted stories certainly encourages reflection—long after the campfire has burned low.

Check It Out

Of course, we can't all attend NASA's Masters Forum, but that doesn't mean we can't learn from their experiences. APPL publishes stories from the forum in their journal ASK Magazine, which is available online as well as in print. I encourage everyone to visit ASK online at appl.nasa.gov/ask. I think you will find the stories and practices interesting, relevant, stimulating—and sometimes even funny. NASA and the DoD have a lot in common, and the bonds we build between us will strengthen us all as we serve this great nation.

DEFENSE LOGISTICS INFORMATION SERVICE (MARCH 21, 2005) ONLINE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE FOR NATO SYMPOSIUM

BATTLE CREEK, Mich.—Organizers have established an online registration system to help interested parties sign up for the 10th International Symposium on Codification, Oct. 10–13 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Members of the Defense Logistics Information Service will join international logisticians, business leaders, trade associations, and other interested individuals gathering from around the world for the symposium. The meetings are conducted every few years to review the current state of the NATO Codification System and discuss future development.

"Logistics continues to change and is becoming more complex. Accordingly, the logisticians' need for standard, accurate information at their fingertips is growing," said Richard Maison, DLIS' executive director, who also serves as the chairman of the NATO Group of National Directors of Codification (Allied Committee 135).

The committee sponsors the meetings to continue the advancement of the NCS, based on the U.S. cataloging system, as the world's standard language of government supply chain logistics. Originally adopted for NATO, the system is now used by more than 50 nations. It is also becoming a standard for e-commerce.

According to Maison, supporters of the NCS are reaching out to industry to build a common language between government and business. Countries are improving their information products and focusing on accuracy and relevancy, and National Codification Bureaus in participating countries seek to build synergy in the logistics chain from the factory to foxhole.

"This is a very exciting time for those involved with codification. The developments we are pursuing and the projects we are now actively supporting can revolutionize the way cataloging is performed in the next five years," Maison said.

The symposium agenda includes speakers from around the world discussing a range of supply chain and codification issues as well as a number of social events planned for both before and during the main conference. Anyone interested in supply chain management, codification (cataloging), logistics and engineering support,



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international standards for data management, and related topics—whether within a military, government, industrial, or commercial enterprise or organization—should attend. All spoken and written material will be presented in English and French.

Those who would like to register online for the symposium can log on to https://registration.meetingmakers.co.uk/dev/cgi/nato_2005/register?short_conference_name=nato_2005 or use the online tool at www.codification2005.org to learn about exhibition or sponsorship opportunities for the symposium.

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH (SBIR) PHASE II CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION (JULY 11–14, 2005) BEYOND PHASE II: READY FOR TRANSITION

The National SBIR PH II Conference will be held July 11–14, 2005, at the Sheraton Hotel and Marina in San Diego, Calif. This conference gives acquisition professionals the chance to meet one on one with small high-tech firms that have innovative technologies. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about transitioning advanced SBIR research and development into your acquisition program

For more information on this event, check the SBIR Web site: <http://www.dodsbir.com/conference> or e-mail sbirconference@brtrc.com.

PRECISION STRIKE PEO FORUM (JULY 28–29, 2005)

The Precision Strike Association (PSA) will host a Precision Strike PEO Forum July 28–29, 2005, at the Emerald Coast Conference Center, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. This year's theme will be "Precision Strike Capabilities for the Future Battlefield." Exhibit and sponsorship opportunities will be available. Send inquiries to Dawn Campbell at info@precisionstrike.org.

ACQUISITION SENIOR LEADERS' CONFERENCE

The Acquisition Senior Leaders' Conference is scheduled for Aug. 22–25, 2005, in Detroit, Mich. Watch the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center Web site at http://asc.army.mil/events/conferences/2004/slc_geninfo.cfm for future updates and conference information.

2005 ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL TEST & EVALUATION ASSOCIATION (ITEA) INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM (SEPT. 26–29, 2005)

The ITEA Symposium 2005 will be held Sept. 26–29, 2005, at the Albuquerque Convention Center in Albuquerque, N.M. This year's event will provide a forum for addressing the issue of transformational test and evaluation, examining the topic from three perspectives:

- **Programs** that are or will be testing in the Joint Force and Coalition Battlespace
- **Methodologies**, processes, resources, tools, and limitations that enable or hinder our testing in the Joint Force and Coalition Battlespace
- **Lessons Learned**, including recommendations for the way ahead.

For more information on this event, check the ITEA Web site: <http://www.itea.org> or call (703) 631-6220.

2005 PEO/SYSCOM COMMANDERS' CONFERENCE (OCT. 18–19, 2005)

The 2005 Program Executive Officer/Systems Command (PEO/SYSCOM) Commanders' Conference will be held at the Defense Acquisition University, Fort Belvoir, Va., Oct. 18–19, 2005. The PEO/SYSCOM Conferences and Workshops are a series of senior-level, invitation-only, non-attribution events that host approximately 400 Department of Defense and industry participants at each event. They provide senior leadership from the Department of Defense and Industry an excellent opportunity to meet and share their views and priorities. As the agenda is finalized, information on the 2005 conference will be posted to the conference Web site at <http://www.peosyscom.com>.

8TH ANNUAL SYSTEMS ENGINEERING CONFERENCE (OCT. 24–27, 2005)

The 8th Annual Systems Engineering Conference will be held Oct. 24–27, 2005, at the Hyatt Regency Islandia, San Diego, Calif. The call for papers and the conference announcement will be mailed and will be available at http://register.ndia.org/inter/view/register.ndia?PID=Brochure&SID=_1D00RC2RA&MID=6870. If you would like to add your information to the mailing list, please contact Phyllis Edmonson at (703) 247-2588 or pedmonson@ndia.org.



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DAU ALUMNI SYMPOSIUM 2005— BEST PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR RAPID ACQUISITION, LOGISTICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Bill Bahnmaier

The 22nd Annual DAU Alumni Association Acquisition Symposium was held April 19–20 on the Capital/Northeast Campus of DAU at Fort Belvoir, Va. It was billed as a practical learning experience on rapid acquisition processes and models, and it lived up to expectations in all aspects. The theme of the symposium was especially timely as our nation's warfighters are currently actively engaged in combat with terrorists world-wide, with particular emphasis on Iraq and Afghanistan. They rely on acquisition leaders and managers to provide the best technology available in a short period of time.

DAUAA's vision—to bring together the best leadership and management resources for improving defense systems acquisition—drives the association and is the key rationale for holding the symposium.

Outstanding Professional Development Work

The symposium opened with Jeff McKeel, retiring president of the DAUAA, recognizing the Capital Area Chapter and DAUAA South Region Chapter for their outstanding professional development work in joint DoD-industry events. He also paid tribute to the financial and intellectual support that the DAUAA has received from corporate sponsors Boeing, Northrop-Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and ESI International.

Keynote Address: Retired Air Force Lt. Gen Lawrence P. Farrell Jr.

Frank J. Anderson Jr., DAU president, introduced the keynote speaker, first briefly describing some of the learning awards that DAU has earned over the past several years and the role of DAU in providing an agile, integrated learning environment where acquisition work in the field merges with learning.

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Lawrence P. Farrell Jr., focused his keynote address on the need to use good old common sense in working program management issues, quoting Will Rogers to make his point: "If common sense is so common, how come we don't see more of it around?" Farrell stressed the need to pay attention to technology readiness levels in transitioning new technology to acquisition programs when we are trying to acquire materiel rapidly. Alluding to recent improprieties that have surfaced on some DoD programs, Farrell opined

that acquisition leaders at all levels need to "just follow the rules and behave."

Service Perspectives

One of the highlights of the morning session on April 19 was a panel discussion on "Service Perspectives on Rapid Acquisition," moderated by Claude Bolton, assistant secretary of the Army (acquisition, logistics and technology (AL&T)). The discussion explored new DoD policy on rapid acquisition; for example, one of the key items recently activated in the Office of the Secretary of Defense—a Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC). The Cell acts as a coordinating mechanism to reach agreement quickly on joint procurements, both strategy and funding, and



Congressman Kurt Weldon, R-Pa., vice-chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, spoke on the role of acquisition managers in supporting the warfighter.

Photograph by Staff Sgt. Mason Lowery, USA.



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Dr. Nancy Spruill, director, acquisition resources and analysis, in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, receives the David D. Acker “Skill in Communication” Award from DAU President Frank J. Anderson Jr.

Photograph by Staff Sgt. Mason Lowery, USA.

has been very effective in speeding the process. The only negative is that the JRAC has experienced push-back from other staff elements throughout DoD because it does not follow traditional acquisition paths. The panel consisted of Dr. Robert Buhrkuhl from the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Army Col. Richard Hansen Jr., PM Soldier Warrior; Barry Dillon, deputy commander, Marine Corps Systems Command; Army Col. Gregory Tubbs, director, U.S. Army Rapid Equipping Force; and Blaise Durante, deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition integration.

View from Congress

Congressman Kurt Weldon, R-Pa., was the featured speaker in the afternoon of the first day. Weldon is vice-chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services and very well-informed on acquisition matters. To make the point about the need to get equipment and materiel rapidly to the troops in combat, he told a story about one of his constituents who lost his life in Iraq, his message being that acquisition managers should not lose sight of the warfighter, who counts on them for rapidly deployed, yet reliable, supported, and effective equip-

ment. He also admonished the audience to put aside differences between the executive and legislative branches of government and cooperate to the fullest in order to better serve the warfighter. Weldon closed his presentation to a standing ovation.

Spruill Receives David D. Acker Award

At the symposium reception and banquet at the Fort Belvoir Officers Club, John J. Young Jr., assistant secretary of the Navy (research, development & acquisition (RD&A)), spoke about the need to encourage innovation within the acquisition community, citing several real-life cases of innovative practices.

Dr. Nancy Spruill, the director, acquisition resources and analysis, in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, was awarded the coveted David D. Acker “Skill in Communication” Award, the DAUAA’s most prestigious award. Created to honor the late Professor David Acker, the award is presented annually to one individual who has promoted and communicated acquisition management excellence to the acquisition workforce.



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DAU Hall of Fame Awards

The evening reception and banquet was also the scene of the annual DAU Hall of Fame awards. Four persons were inducted into the DAU Hall of Fame: Claude Bolton, assistant secretary of the Army (AL&T) and former commandant of the Defense Systems Management College; Gregory Caruth, former director of the DAU Visual Arts and Press; Paul McIlvaine, former DAU logistics department chair and renowned author; and Donna Richbourg, former director, acquisition initiatives Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L).

Logistics and Defense Industry Views

Other key rapid acquisition practitioners and panelists during the remainder of the symposium were Lt. Col. John Wright from the U.S Army Rapid Equipping Force, who presented several examples of how the Army is rapidly equipping (not necessarily fielding) urgently required equipment to the warfighter; Dr. Bob Buharkuhl, who presented on the need for coordinated responses across the Services to meet urgent operational needs; a Performance-Based Support Panel, led by Randy Fowler of the DAU faculty, which included senior Service representatives discussing how best to support equipment rapidly delivered to the troops; and an industry panel on rapid acquisition, co-moderated by Brad Brown, past

president of the Pioneer Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Company and currently a DAU faculty member, and Richard Rumpf, former assistant secretary of the Navy (RD&A). The panel looked at how industry can best support the concept of rapid acquisition.

Non-Defense Industry View: The Last Word

The final speaker of the symposium was John Phillips, a former assistant secretary of defense for logistics and a retired Air Force general officer. Phillips is now the vice-president for government operations for the Home Depot. His engaging presentation stressed how Home Depot is employing innovative ideas in getting material to the customer faster, whether that customer be Harry or Harriet Homeowner or the DoD warfighter.

This year's Symposium was well-attended, and participants went away with a sense that a model for rapid acquisition, technology, and logistics is beginning to emerge.

For more information on the DAUAA, go to www.dauaa.org.

Bahnmaier is the newly elected president of the DAUAA. He is a retired Marine and a former major system program manager.

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