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MARCH MEETING: THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY: EARLY CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGIES

PROF. JENNIFER I. BRAND, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

WEBEX MEETING NUMBER 276 141 101 (further directions on page 5)

THURSDAY, 26 MARCH 2015

9:00 pm EDT, 8:00 pm CDT, 7:00 pm MDT, 6:00 pm PDT;

UTC/GMT 0100 27 March 2015



Dr. Brand will introduce the history of chemical industries that have shaped the world since time immemorial and the ways they changed lives, often in unforeseen ways. She will also discuss an engineering approach to historical lessons.

Brand’s career spans private industry, national labs, and academia, with technical applications ranging from energy and the environment to supercritical fluids processing. Special projects include industrial-academic collaborations, and engineering education, present, past, and future. More information may be found on the [VLS Events Website](#).

INNOVATIONS FROM THE PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Amanda Scalza

After much experimentation and research, the Virtual Local Section will return to WebEx webinar technology starting this March. Though relatively expensive compared to many of the new startup webinar companies, the product is consistent, reliable, and easy to use for all involved. These features are vital to making our meetings successful, and therefore pricing must come second.

Value, quality, and reliability can often trump price, as can be seen by the survival of top companies. Many of the today's top chemical companies come to mind have been around for over a century. Throughout that history, these companies have found success by creating unique solutions for societal needs, and following through by producing them with a dependable quality. From plastics and textiles, fertilizer and pharmaceuticals, the world has been transformed by chemical ideas, great and small, that have become life's necessities.

This year, the Virtual Local Section is working to bring you the stories of these prodigious companies in a series of VLS meetings with the rather cumbersome working title of, "History of How the Chemical Industry Has Shaped the World". Our first industrial speaker in the series will be Julian Carisio from DuPont on April 23rd.

Other speakers besides our historians are planned, too. Our May Speaker will be [Prof. James Bagian](#), an engineer and

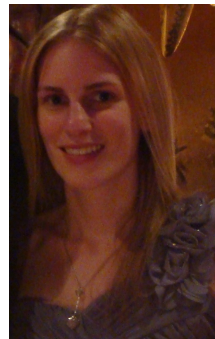
medical doctor who is currently the Director, Center for Healthcare Engineering Patient Safety, University of Michigan. He will talk about his experiences being a NASA astronaut.

In October, our speaker will be [Vice Admiral Joseph Dyer, USN \(ret\)](#), a chemical engineer and former Navy test pilot, who has just finished testifying before Congress on ethics – more on that in later issues.

--- Amanda Scalza

FROM THE CHAIR: PRIORITIZING WITH TIGHT BUDGETS --- NOT JUST FOR YPS

Amanda Scalza



There's a lot great to be said about Texas Hill Country in the spring. By the end of April, the skies will be clear, and the weather will be hot, but not unbearable. The wineries will be bountiful and picturesque with growing grapes, and the music, as always, will keep you on your toes. Sounds good enough to make you want to visit, right? As a bonus, the AIChE Spring Meeting and Global Congress on Safety will be held in Austin on April 26-30, 2015.

Are you hesitating about asking your organization to send you to Austin because budgets are tight nowadays? Let's think this through – we are usually told the budget is tight in times of both feast and famine. And tight budgets don't necessarily mean "no

spending”, but rather “be sure you are getting good value for your resources spent”. While conferences and training may be considered by some as the low hanging fruit of budget trimming, the benefits of wisely selected professional trips can far outweigh the costs. Just think how many new company policies, procedures, and training are based on best practices, hazard analysis, or other information disseminated at national professional meetings.

For a young professional, however, it can be difficult to choose the right training and conferences to spend any budget on. And it can be hard to know how to justify a request for institutional support for a trip for a conference. Everything looks useful when you don’t yet know what will be important!

To push past the budget barrier and achieve the best value for training, I always approach the problem in the way below:

1. Is there a specific problem I am trying to solve? Is this the best forum for finding ways to solve it?
2. How can both my company and I benefit from this particular training, now and in the future?
3. Is there an alternative means of obtaining this information if I’m unable to attend?
4. Are there any secondary benefits to attending this training above another?

For me and for my organization, the AIChE Spring Meeting is a good fit. Additional benefits beyond my specific

targeted sessions include the networking and plentiful variety of the lectures. I look forward to taking full advantage of all my opportunities at the Spring Meeting, and feel it is an excellent professional value. For others, the Annual Meeting held in the autumn, or a smaller topical conference may be a better fit. But whatever your needs, choose wisely and don’t let a small budget get in the way of continuing education and professional development.

FROM THE EDITOR: TOO MUCH INFORMATION !

Jennifer I. Brand

We are drowning in a monumental deluge of “information” engulfing us from all directions. Ads infiltrate our browsers and emails, peddling whatever some algorithm at Google or equivalent decrees we should want or need. Screens blare at us in airports and waiting rooms; our phones can flash nonstop tweets from strangers in the far corners of the globe. Be it fact, fiction, or fantasy, “information” bombards us from all sides. We can feel stressed and overwhelmed by all this information and long for what we imagine were the quieter, simpler times of our ancestors who did not have to keep up with such high speeds and volumes of information transmissions.

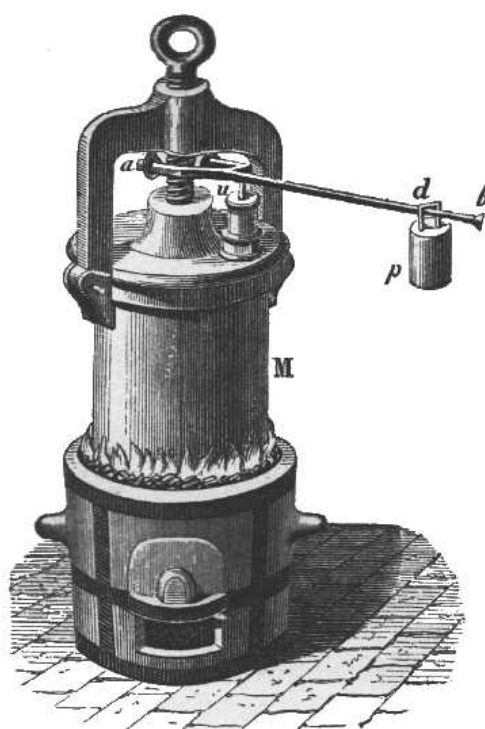
There are some strategies which can help us stay afloat in this raging sea of information. Being selective about where we spend our time and resources in the information market helps. In her column this month, VLS Chair Amanda Scalza

discusses how she selects what conferences to attend to optimize her acquisition of useful and relevant professional information.

Historical perspective can give us insight into both what has changed and what is still tried and true, like successful responses to similar change in the past. Realizing the value of such a perspective, I hope you share my anticipation at the 2015 VLS Programming Series which includes some well-know speakers from industry on the theme of “History of How the Chemical Industry Has Shaped the World” (See the Mark Your Calendar” below). The VLS Programming Committee, with special thanks to Deb Grubbe and Amanda Scalza, has really been busy (see article, above.)

It can be both edifying and entertaining to step back and realize that, although the computerized Internet is new, “information revolutions” are not. Think of the effects of printing explosion after the Gutenberg Bible. Reading became much more useful for ordinary citizens as the printed word became cheaper and more available; written information and ideas, good, bad, and indifferent, travelled faster and farther than before. More recently, there was a communications and information revolution in Victorian times. Tom Standage’s enjoyable book, *The Victorian Internet*, explores the remarkable parallels with the electronic information explosion we are experiencing now and how people reacted, adapted, and adopted the new technologies.

In trying to put together this Thursday’s program, the kickoff lecture in the historical series, I, too, am struggling with too much information. My mission is to fill in some general background on early chemical industries, setting the scene for the specific stories of later speakers. Yet I will have less than an hour of your time, certainly not enough to discuss even a sample of the centuries or millennia of our chemical and engineering heritage. So join the VLS on Thursday to see which strategy I end up using for “too much information”. Can I really extract and distill all this information into a classic like the 2-act play *The Compleat Wrks of Wllm Shkspr (Abridged)*? Or will I just learn to speak really, really, really fast between now and then?



Pressure Cooker and Safety Valve c. 1685

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

VLS Meetings are the fourth Thursday of the month:

--- Thursday, April 23rd ----

Justin Carisio, DuPont (History Series)

--- Thursday, May 28th ----

James Bagian, MD, PE, astronaut

Thursday, June 25th

Thursday, July 23rd

Thursday, August 27rd

Thursday, September 24th

--- Thursday, October 22nd ----

Vice Admiral Joseph Dyer, USN (ret)

2015 [European Industrial and Technical Heritage Year](#)

2015 [Spring Meeting and 11th Global Congress on Process Safety](#) April 26-30, 2015, Austin, TX

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE VLS NEWSLETTER

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Professional announcements, ads, or opportunities? Contact the editor at jbrand@unl.edu using "VLS Newsletter" in the subject line

ATTENDING A VLS MEETING

- **Join by internet:**
 - <https://aiche.webex.com/aiche/j.php?MTID=m8a0766c5d03559acce05542a78513954>
 - Meeting number 276 141 101

- **Join by phone:** Access code: 276 141 101
 - 1-866-469-3239 Call-in toll-free number (US/Canada)
 - 1-650-429-3300 Call-in toll number (US/Canada)
 - [Global Call-in numbers](#)
 - [Toll-free calling restrictions](#)

Attendance at a Virtual Section Meeting is open to AIChE Virtual Local Section Members, AIChE members and other interested people.