



Shaping the Industry

The importance of supporting career growth at the grassroots level

BY TAYLOR SASS

There has never been a more thrilling time to be a member of IRWA. Membership is at an all-time high, international Chapters are forming in Africa, Nigeria and Mexico, and advanced education technology is paving a new path for this progressive industry.

At the time of its inception in 1934, the founders of the Association may have envisioned a different future for right of way. After all, television was still in its infancy. Yet, even though the founders knew little of what was ahead for the right of way industry, they were able to build a foundation to prepare for it. They understood the value of relationships and the importance of treating landowners ethically and with respect.

Members can probably flash back to their early days in right of way, asking themselves

questions like, “What in the world is fee property?” or “Will landowners ever stop yelling at me?” Without the Association, it may have taken years to establish relationships with other right of way professionals where they felt comfortable enough to ask these kinds of questions. Many of these relationships have lasted decades, transitioning into partnerships, trusted clientele and even deep friendships.

This leads to the question of whether we can accelerate the relationship-

building aspect. What if individuals new to the profession could connect quicker, grow relationships faster and create an environment where new ideas are welcome? Could we catapult this industry’s progression even further? Through the Young Professional’s group, we are determined to explore these questions.

This past year, the YP group has made great strides both regionally and internationally, and the momentum continues. The YP group presented its 3rd Annual Young Professionals Symposium in conjunction with IRWA’s Annual International Education Conference in San Diego, California in June 2015. More than 70 young professionals registered for the event, and we were able to obtain 11 industry sponsors.

During the educational sessions, we had the opportunity to hear from industry practitioners from TransCanada, Sunoco Logistics, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy. And at the various networking events, relationships started to develop. The momentum didn’t end there. A young professional was elected to serve on IRWA’s International Executive Committee, while another was asked to serve on the Right of Way International Education Foundation Board of Trustees. As the YPs further develop their voice, it’s rewarding to know that the Association is listening.

Developing the YP group has been a wild ride. The current goal has been to identify representation from every IRWA Region and join forces in establishing a foundation for the future. It is imperative to ignite YP growth at the grassroots level for this effort. The aim is to empower the Chapters and Regions to unite their



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local young professionals while creating a beneficial environment for specialized education and networking. Building from the bottom up is crucial, however we also need to make internal communication and resources easy to access.

As we engage more region representation, we are producing the international framework for the YP group moving forward. Our Region Representatives include past YP Task Force members, original YP leaders, as well as fresh new faces. We are dedicated to creating substantial advances throughout this year to continue advancing the YP initiatives. With the experienced diversity of the group, significant progress has already been made since the YP Symposium in June.

Whether young in age or new to the profession, we encourage members who identify as young professionals to join us. The first step in connecting with fellow young professionals is to stay informed. Sign up to receive the IRWA YP Monthly E-Letter, which will include event updates

from every participating Chapter and Region, as well as at the international level. In upcoming articles, we will outline the specific initiatives taking place as the group moves forward.

We are asking employers to become advocates for the YP group by supporting our efforts. Employers hold the valuable responsibility of shaping today's industry leaders. By encouraging the YP group during and beyond its development, they are also contributing to shaping the industry in the future—leaving a professional legacy to be proud of. Just as the founders of IRWA started with an initiative, so too must the future continue with one.

For more information on the IRWA YP Initiative, visit us at irwayp@gmail.com, follow us on Twitter at @IRWAYP, the Young Professionals group on IRWA's Member Network and on LinkedIn. And we invite you to join us at the 4th Annual IRWA YP Symposium on June 11, 2016 in Nashville, Tennessee! ☺

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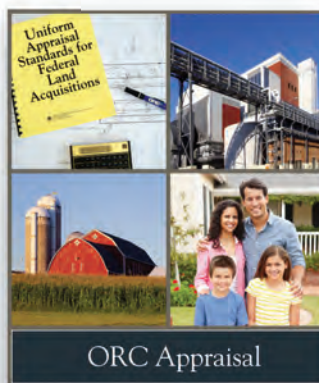
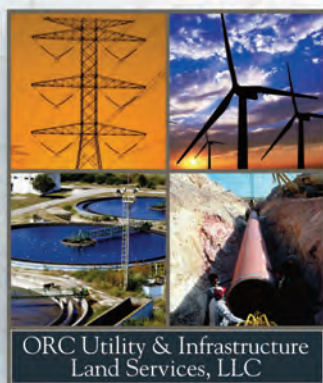
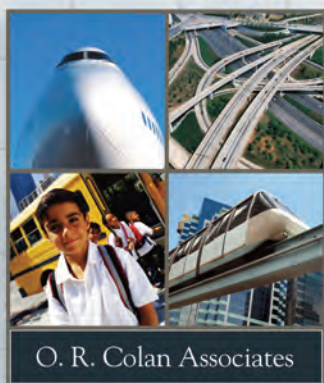
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