

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF HYDROLOGY

Sandor C. Csallany, Alexander Zaporozec, and Roman Kanivetsky

In a democratic society the needs of the people are manifested by passing laws or regulations by the representatives of the people. In the period between the needs being recognized and the laws enacted, usually a group of dedicated people start advocating the cause.

The establishment to the American Institute of Hydrology very well fits into the above described pattern. As we all know, the only way to become a hydrologist or hydrogeologist was through "on-the-job-training". No degree could be earned in hydrology or hydrogeology and not enough courses were offered practically anywhere in the United States that would really qualify someone to be a hydrologist or a hydrogeologist before 1970.

The importance of hydrology and hydrogeology significantly increased in the early 1960s when water resources planning, development, and management came into national focus. Water resources activities and ever increasing industrial development were directly and indirectly led to the realization of ecological concerns. A number of leading scientists became advocates of the problems and arose the national consciousness. Suddenly everyone awakened that we indeed "messed up" our environment and that we were still doing it. The realization and the advocacy of environmental problems were followed by first slowly and later rapidly enacted laws and regulations by the federal government and states through their newly established environmental agencies.

These activities resulted not only in an increased importance of scientific hydrology but also in tremendous expansion in opportunities for work in this area. Consequently, government agencies at all levels, consulting firms, corporations, companies, and even law firms started employing "hydrologists" and "hydrogeologists". This upsurge in demand for hydrologists and hydrogeologists resulted in a short supply of qualified professionals. Since anyone could call themselves "hydrologists" or "hydrogeologists", large segments of engineers and geologists who did not have training in hydrology or hydrogeology entered the job market. This unfortunate situation led to an almost national disaster in terms of waste of money and endangerment of public health because in fact unqualified "hydrologists" and "hydrogeologists" regulated truly unqualified, so called "hydrologists" and "hydrogeologists". It became apparent that this particular profession is being misrepresented by unqualified people.

This disturbing situation led to the recognition that there is indeed a need for change. Consequently, the establishment of an organization where hydrologists and hydrogeologists can be certified/registered as professional hydrologists and professional hydrogeologists was conceived by Dr. Csallany, who in turn enlisted the help of Dr. Zaporozec and Dr. Kanivetsky. These two scientists and an engineer - a hydrologist and two hydrogeologists - developed the Constitution and Bylaws with input by others and prepared long-term plans for AIH in 1981, when the American Institute of Hydrology was officially established. One of the primary goals was to establish a strict certification process in order to ensure that the members of the Institute would be considered in every respect on par with registered engineers, physicians, or lawyers. It is the objective of AIH to provide professional recognition by certification only until such time when all states will adopt a policy to make it mandatory to register hydrologists or hydrogeologists to practice. At such time the need for AIH to do certification will become unnecessary. However, it has been and still is the long-term objective and the goal of AIH to become the "Society of Professional Hydrologists and Hydrogeologists", whether or not the registered person has been a member

of AIH before registration took place.

There are insufficient educational opportunities to become a hydrologist, hydrogeologist, hydrologist-engineer, or hydrogeologist-engineer by earning a degree in one of these fields. In order to overcome the shortcoming, AIH has been committed to assume leadership in the area of education in the fields of hydrology and hydrogeology. This commitment resulted in the sponsorship of a number of important conferences, symposia, short courses, workshops, and international joint meetings.

When the founders of the Institute look back at the first decade they certainly feel that their efforts were not spent in vain. The association's first decade is an especially critical one, and the Institute has completed it successfully. Let us reflect on some of AIH's accomplishments and problems.

One of the biggest challenges at the outset was to overcome the initial reservations with which the establishment of AIH was met. Some of the organizations and individuals were concerned that AIH was formed to duplicate their objectives and efforts. The certification program was criticized as unwarranted and unnecessary. The scope and progress of our activities and a rapid membership growth proved the critics wrong at both accounts.

Another big challenge of the first decade of AIH was financial security. After years of operating in the red, with operations financed by loans and sustained by efforts of many volunteers and dedication of the Administrative Manager, Mrs. Helen Klose, our organization has been operating in the black for the fourth year in a row.

Thanks to your help and support, the AIH membership, operations, and programs grew at a fast pace. Also helpful in this respect was the design for sustained growth and continuum in leadership, which the founders provided for in the Constitution by tending the first Executive Committee for two consecutive three-year terms. The events were unfolding very quickly. The first member of the Registration Board was appointed in October 1981; first application received in February 1982; and the first professional members were certified (and first applications denied) in December 1982, when the Executive Committee was fully formed. Other "firsts" quickly followed. The first issue of the AIH Bulletin was published in October 1983 and the first national conference was held in May 1984. The first issue of the AIH journal, "Hydrological Science and Technology" was published in September 1985. The first state section was established in June 1986. The first award was given in March 1987. The first conference proceedings were published in April 1989. And finally, the first continuing education units were awarded in June 1991.

What are the major segments of AIH activities as they continually develop? The four major segments are, the certification program and membership services, the annual meeting, publications, and short courses.

Annual meetings with technical conferences and short courses are firmly entrenched in the schedule of activities. They attract a large number of nonmembers from the hydrologic community and serve as the best promoter of AIH goals and ideals.

Our publication program has been steadily improving. The appearance of the AIH Bulletin and Professional Registry has grown more professional. Our journal, "Hydrological Science and Technology," is back on track, after a period of stagnation. We have started publication of proceedings of AIH conferences, with three volumes already published. We are striving to get the proceedings published

before conferences. We have also initiated a successful publishing venture with Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, which would help us better serve the educational needs of our members and applicants.

The increasing attendance at short courses and workshops has led to us to develop a framework for continuing educational programs, and offering continuing educational units, which would provide AIH members and the national and international hydrologic community a means to keep abreast of advances within the profession and help applicants prepare for the examination.

The 10th anniversary marks the passing of the "Founders Era." The founders believe that AIH fulfilled its mission by establishing a well-established certification program; high quality meetings, short courses, and workshops; and a strong program in the field of education. Involvement of volunteers in carrying out the Institute's activities and an efficient administrative support has enabled us to accomplish so many things within a relatively short time. The volunteers who helped to achieve our goals are too numerous to mention by name. We would like to take this opportunity to express our grateful appreciation to the present and previous members of the Executive, Advisory, and Registration Boards; organizing committees of conferences and workshops; and last but not least to our manager for their hard work.

In summary, it can be said that AIH has contributed significantly to the unification of scientific hydrology as well as hydrology and hydrogeology as a profession.