

Thirty years jubilee of the Polish Synchrotron Radiation Society

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Thirty years is a lot of time, looking from a personal perspective. Many of us witnessing the Society time travel from the beginning feel nostalgia and ponder on values the Society brought to our lives. From a purely scientific point of view, it gathered people strongly lobbying in favor of developing our material research tools to a contemporary level and having access to such tools. We do not know whether it would be possible to support by state our access to Large Scale Research Facilities or to sponsor the building of the first Polish synchrotron without pressure from the community. But we know that nothing happens without human activity, and behind all these initiatives, there were people of the Polish Synchrotron Radiation Society.

The social context is the second, possibly more critical element of the Society's history. Meeting and talking to other time travelers continuously changes our lives, bringing new motivations and new choices. The Society during these 30 years showed outstanding and astounding activity in the organization of meetings. Each year, a national or international (interchangeably) meeting was held with its minutes printed in the Society Bulletin. Amazement comes from realizing that each time some 'sucker' has to be found, devoting a lot of his time and energy to activity having nothing to do with discovering hidden laws of nature. He/she usually makes few other dependent people do extended office work as typically, for meetings, no professional companies were employed. A self-supporting meeting requires many participants, so the submitted contributions are rarely rejected, resulting in their overall low rating. But surprisingly, the 'sucker' work brings no planned added value. When we listen to our colleagues, we often arrive at new ideas, form opinions, motivate ourselves and criticize. Besides our personal development, unnoticeably, we create SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY - an abstract being of practical importance. We can shape our community by favoring scientific values appearing from substantive assessment and not bureaucratic measures like bibliometric factors, financial impact, ministry guidelines, or political correctness. It is something vanishing in the contemporary world but worth fighting for. Do not let money and bureaucracy ruin science for future generations. The task is increasingly difficult with broadening the scope of science and interdisciplinarity. The right referee for scientific councils or journal editorials is harder to find. Scientific evaluation often is reduced to summing the bibliometric points. It seems that the only cure can come from an active SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY.

During the past 30 years, the Polish Synchrotron Radiation Society gathered around itself few hundred people (including nearly 200 members and sympathizers) participating in the meetings. Among them, many ventured into organizational activity, and some were 'sucked into,' including young members. Our 30 years old jubilarian is still in good shape, and ongoing generation change runs smoothly.

The Society also has impressive financial records. The conference activities and skillful attracting of sponsors brought net positive financial results, which allowed the statutory fees to be low. They cannot pose a financial barrier even for students.

Individual perspective for most of us involves private contacts, friendships, and meeting memories. For some of us, it is a nostalgic look back to when we were young and pretty, full of energy to conquer the scientific world. Since then, indifferent time took away a few of our colleagues whom we will neither meet nor talk to. We got to know a few young colleagues sucked into organizational activities despite a common negative response to the question: "what the Society has to offer?". In a world ruled by money and commerce, seemingly, organizational activity has nothing to offer and is a waste of time. But, if we plan to be involved in science for life, contributing to the scientific community is an intangible asset worth nurturing. It is not about settling something by knowing somebody, and it is about the survival of science as a human pursuit to know the secrets of the world, not as a bazaar where we sell for the best-offered price. In the end, also remember that our colleagues evaluate scientific grants from the scientific community we attempt to shape.