

Minnesota Educational Media Organization

MEMO HISTORY 1987 – MAY 2005

By
Mary Alice Anderson
MEMO member since 1976

1987 – 2004 have been years of change for the school media profession, school media programs and for the MEMO. The explosion and evolution of technology in education was the dominant driving force behind many of the changes. New and evolving education standards and curriculum, a changing economy and school funding shortfalls are also major factors.

THE ORGANIZATION

MEMO's leaders a wide variety of expertise: from a school principal/superintendent to a motorcycle "hot rodder" to a DJ. What they all share is vision, leadership and a passion for school media programs and our professional organization. All have had media certification but specialized in teaching teachers, coordinating district media services, serving students and teachers in library/media centers or a technology capacity. The MEMO awards committee has presented Lifetime Achievement awards to four of Memo's outstanding leaders. Recipients are Dr. Fran McDonald, Lars Steltzner, Dr. Frank Birmingham, and Joan Larson.

As the responsibilities of MEMO president has grown, more people have chosen to share the duties as co-presidents. MEMO's first Co-presidents since the merger between MASL and AVCAM were Judy Arnold and Lars Steltzner who served in 1998-1999. MEMO presidents since 1987 are:

1987-1988 Tim Eklund
1988-1989 Shirley Christenson
1989-1990 Gail Jubala
1990-1991 Frank Birmingham
1991-1992 Judy Bull
1992-1993 Fran McDonald
1993-1994 James Marshall
1994-1995 Fran McDonald
1995-1996 Phyllis Lacroix
1996-1997 Donna Winder

1997-1998 June Gross
1998-1999 Judy Arnold and Lars Steltzner
1999-2000 Allen Edwards and Leslie Erickson
2000-2001 Susan Benson Krohn and Charlie (Linda) Lindberg
2001-2002 Nancy Evans and Susan Meyer
2002-2003 Becky Beck and Gay Galles
2003-2004 Doug Johnson
2004-2005 Jane Prestebak

The position of administrative assistant continues to be important to MEMO's organization. Deanne Sylte is the current administrative assistant.

MEMO's by laws are regularly reviewed and changes are made to meet other organizational and membership needs. Geographic regions were restructured in 2003. The original Telecommunications SID became the Information Technology SID and a literature SID was established to promote reading and help MEMO members stay on top of the ever-changing field of children's and young adult literature. The make-up of the MEMO board of directors and executive committee has also evolved. One significant change was dissolving the position of Vice-President as much of what used to be the responsibility of the vice-president is now handled by the MEMO administrative assistant. Major changes were implemented 2004 to broaden the scope of MEMO membership as MEMO welcome's a broader scope of educators who support school media/technology programs and information/technology literature.

The MEMO Telecommunications SID continued to support technology initiatives and help members grow professionally as technology became a strong presence in schools in the late 1980's and 90's. MEMO members serving in Telecommunications SID leadership positions included Frank Birmingham, Mary Alice Anderson, Gladys Sheehan, Bill Fredell, Jerry Skelly and Richard Chase. The annual Winter Telecommunications Conference continued through the early 90's but was eventually disbanded as technology was incorporated in other MEMO conferences and events.

Another change for MEMO was moving the annual summer leadership conference from the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph to a new location, Riverwood Conference Center near Annandale on the way to St. Cloud. More recently conferences have been held the Minnesota Center for the Humanities in St. Paul. The addition of nationally known keynote speakers, Dr. Gary Hartzell in 2003 and Dr. David Loertscher in 2004, brought increased attendance to those summer leadership conferences.

MEMO's annual fall conference continues to be the organization's primary conference. Brainerd area resorts, a popular conference location in the 1970's and 80s, have been discontinued as a conference venue. The conference now rotates annually between the Minneapolis-St.Paul area and a greater Minnesota city. Conferences are primarily held in Duluth, Mankato and Rochester. The 2003 conference was held in Fargo, North Dakota. The mid-winter conference held each year in Alexandria also continues as an annual event.

MEMO maintains affiliate relations with The American Association of School Librarians (AASL), The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Minnesota organizations that MEMO works closely with include the Information Literacy Council, the Minnesota Coalition Against Censorship, the Minnesota Literacy Council, and the Minnesota Library Association.

In the 1990's MEMO and the Minnesota Library Education Association hired a joint lobbyist to work with the state legislature. Glenn Marejka (retired superintendent from Hutchinson) was the MEMO lobbyist in January - May 1995. Dale Carrison was hired in October 1995 to be the MEMO lobbyist and continued through 1996. MEMO list of Elaine Keefe is the current lobbyist Judy Bull and Dr. Frank Birmingham have provided vision and leadership for the legislative committee.

PUBLICATIONS

Minnesota Media continues to be MEMO's premier publication. The journal was published three-four times each year during the late 1980's and early 1990's. Under the editorship of Jane Prestebak, the journal received a national award in 1995. Since the late 1900's *Minnesota Media* has been published as an annual journal. Laurie Conzemius is the current editor.

MEMORandom became MEMO's newest regular publication in 1990 with Doug Johnson as its first (and long time) editor. MEMORandom was established to provide frequent and up to date information to the MEMO membership. MEMORandom has been published continuously throughout the school year since 1990 and is now published primarily on the MEMO web site. Mary Alice Anderson is the current editor. A second newsletter is MT News, is published periodically by the Information Technology SID. Marc Johnson is the current editor.

MEMO leaders were also involved in the publication of several other significant documents endorsed by the MEMO board of Directors and made available to members.

Selection Policies and Reevaluation Procedures, prepared by Dr. Fran McDonald and published jointly with the Minnesota Coalition Against Censorship were made available in 1991.

Information Connections (1992) provided guidelines for Minnesota School Media Programs. *Information Connections* provided a framework for implementing the vision defined in *Information Power*, the national guidelines. Dr. Frank Birmingham chaired the Information Connections writing team; Mary Alice Anderson and Elsie Husom were co-editors. *Information Connections* combined state guidelines, research; best practices checklists, and practical ideas. *Information Connections* incorporated the emerging use of technology in schools and changing educational practices and standards. MEMO members also conducted statewide and regional Information Power workshops to help MEMO members develop strategies for implementing national guidelines in their schools.

Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs were developed and published in 2000. The standards were drafted by Doug Johnson and revised by a MEMO members from around the state. Jane Prestebak with assistance from Darlene Arnold and Mary Dalbotten collected research support and correlated the standards with other national and state standards. The document addresses three essential elements of a media program: Learning and Teaching; Information Access and Delivery; and Program Administration. Minimum, Standard and Exemplary criteria for 26

separate components are defined. The document also includes checklists for assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation. Commissioner Christine Jax of the Department of Children, Families endorsed the *Standards* in March 2001. A video scripted by Doug Johnson, produced by Lisa Finsness, and professionally narrated by Don Shelby of WCCO TV was created as a tool to help MEMO members share the vision.

Recommended Standards for Information and Technology Literacy was endorsed by the MEMO membership in 2004. The document describes the processes and specific skills a learner must understand and practice in order to meet a minimum level of information literacy. These are divided into four general areas: the research process, technology use, reading and media literacy, and responsible use of technology and information. Corresponding documents align these standards with Minnesota content standards.

MEMO's own website, MEMOweb, < <http://www.MEMOweb.org> > was established in the late 1990's. MEMOweb provides organizational information and information about media programs and standards. Lars Stelzner is MEMO's Webmaster.

MEMOlist, a listserv, and MEMO-Mail, a member's only mailing list, also help keep MEMO members in touch.

STANDARDS, CURRICULUM AND A CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Throughout its history MEMO has been fortunate to have active support and leadership from personnel at the Minnesota Department of Education. Dr. Robert Miller, Mary Dalbotten, Joan Wallin, and John See, a former MEMO President, all helped the organization move forward and provided support. The relationship was reciprocal as many MEMO members worked with Department of Education personnel in areas such as curriculum writing and revision, standards development, and software evaluation. MEMO members also worked with Department personnel to plan and conduct Resource Based Teaching workshops, Outcome Based Education training and Inquiry Learning workshops were held in conjunction with implementing the Profile of Learning in the late 1990's.

THE MINNESOTA MEDIA CENSUS

In the 1980's a 1990's many states conducted studies about the impact of school media programs on student achievement. Minnesota own study was first conducted in 2002. Susan Baxter, Metronet Executive Director, wrote the grant proposals, which were funded by LSTA grants. The purpose of the study was to determine how well Minnesota's media programs were meeting the standards and impacting student achievement. Many MEMO members were also actively involved in the development of the "Minnesota Census." *Check it Out! The Results of the School Library Media Program Census* was published in January 2003. The study proved that yes, media programs do make a difference and there is a correlation between student achievement and access to good media programs. A smaller, follow-up census was conducted in 2004. The findings, *Check it Out! The Results of the 2004 School Library Media Program Census* were published in October 2004.

THE BUDGET CRUNCH AND CHANGES IN STATE LEVEL SUPPORT

As the organization moves forward, it is faced with a declining membership, which mirrors education funding cuts and reductions in school media program staffing. Members provide support for members whose positions are in jeopardy and the organization advocates for state media programs through its own publications, speaking, writing and lobbying.

Funding cuts at the State level even led to the abolishment of a separate School Media and Technology Section within the State Department of Education in the late 1990's. The Office of Library Development and Services (LDS) was abolished in 2002. A state library advisory board was established to help the library community at this time. Newly reorganized groups were eventually established. In 2004, the State Library Services and School Technology was formed within the Department of Education. State Librarian Suzanne Miller and Mary Mesikohmer Project Planner with State Library Services and School Technology are MEMO's contacts at the state level. The State Library Advisory Council was established in 1994. Lars Stelzner, former MEMO president was elected chair of this council for 2005. The

task force will work with the State Librarian Suzanne Miller and Advisory Council chair, to plan and conduct information forums and draft the new Minnesota State Plan For Libraries.

CONCLUSION

MEMO history part III will undoubtedly chronicle more changes in both MEMO and in education. New names, new successes, and new challenges will be cited. Yet MEMO will continue to be “an organization serving school media and information technology professionals. MEMO is committed to providing leadership and professional growth for quality media and technology programs which meet the learning and instructional needs of our students, staff and administration.”

Mary Alice Anderson compiled this update to MEMO History Part I (1976 – 1987) with input from Judy Bull, Roger Sween, and Mary Dalbotten. Phyllis Thornley compiled the first MEMO history in 1986 with assistance from Mary Dalbotten, Doris Pagel, Mary Birmingham and Wesley Grabow.

First Published in *Minnesota Media*, Volume 25, Spring 2005. Published here with permission.