

# President's Message

In the early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis, I drafted my President's Message for the April issue of OPN. There was much uncertainty as to the course the virus would take—and whether my message would be relevant when published. And now, a month further along, I can't predict what life will be like for us in May any more than I could have foreseen in April.

With much of the world under stay-at-home orders, people everywhere are making a valiant effort to cope with our new normal: embracing videoconferencing, communicating from six feet away, hand-and surface-washing as never before—fundamentally changing how we interact with each other. As we adjust, OSA is focused on adapting alongside its community and leveraging our technology for timely solutions. As 2009 OSA President Thomas Baer of Stanford University and Christina Baer of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, USA, write on p. 18, many technologies used in fighting the virus—ranging from gene sequencing, diagnostics and UV sterilization to telemedicine and videoconferencing—have been enabled or improved through advances in optics and photonics.

In March, the OSA team delivered a large-scale, virtual OFC conference that included 11 tracks, three show-floor theaters, live-streaming plenary talks and more. In early April, OSA was scheduled to hold its annual Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., USA, a key event that brings together volunteer leadership and staff to plan for the organization's future. A virtual meeting, quickly and capably pulled together by our technical team, allowed us to seamlessly carry on with this important work. The outcomes include a coordinated effort across all divisions of OSA to provide free, virtual programming available at [osa.org/WeAreOn](https://osa.org/WeAreOn) for the next few months, and virtual conferences, including CLEO. Please join us in the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laser this month.

In all of these efforts, we benefited from the findings of the Digital Rapid Action Committee spearheaded by 2019 OSA President Ursula Gibson.

As we look ahead to the now-annual International Day of Light on 16 May, we find ourselves similarly adapting to a new reality in celebrating this milestone. This celebration usually consists of a worldwide network of grassroots, in-person events. This year, however, we will celebrate by using online channels to share our stories of the importance of light science and technology in improving lives.

While I know better than to make any predictions for May, I can and do hope that the resilience of our professional community, friends, and families—and so many who offer their essential services selflessly—will have helped us turn a corner in resolving this pandemic. Although we're together in spirit more than ever before, I look forward to the time we can all connect again in-person and (unmasked!) face-to-face. Until then, please stay safe and healthy.



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—Stephen D. Fantone,  
OSA President