

Reflections on 25 Issues of *ASPIRE*®



Photo: PCI

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As I was beginning work on this issue of *ASPIRE*®, I realized it is the 25th issue for which I have been the managing technical editor. This issue is also the 57th issue since the first one appeared in Winter 2007, which means we are embarking on the 15th year of *ASPIRE*. So, it seemed like a suitable time to pause and reflect on the past six years during which I have been involved in collecting ideas for articles, then following them through editing and production to a completed issue. Fortunately, I get to stay involved in the technical editing and can leave the production in the capable hands of our great staff.

In 2014, I took over the role of the managing technical editor from Dr. Henry G. Russell—a giant in our field, and a good friend. He had done a terrific job working with John Dick, the executive editor, and others to get *ASPIRE* started and make it into a highly respected resource for the concrete bridge community. When I began work on *ASPIRE*, William Nickas was the editor-in-chief, having taken over that role from John Dick a number of years earlier. William is still the editor-in-chief, and his many strengths, varied experiences, and keen insights have suited him well to lead *ASPIRE* to continue to produce the high-quality content that has been the hallmark of the magazine. The *ASPIRE* team also works with several of the members of the National Concrete Bridge Council (NCBC), whose collective mission is, in part, to gather and disseminate information on the design, construction, and condition of concrete bridges. These members of NCBC are the sponsors of *ASPIRE* (see the list on page 2) and comprise *ASPIRE*'s editorial advisory board. As such, they provide direction and reviews for articles. We also have an outstanding staff who perform the editorial and production work to prepare each issue for publication.

In addition to being responsible for the technical review and editing of articles, my main role is to develop content for the magazine, so I am always looking for ideas for articles. *ASPIRE* is “the concrete bridge magazine,” so I endeavor to provide articles on concrete bridges of all types and sizes, from cast-in-place, short-span slab structures to pretensioned concrete girders and post-tensioned segmental box-girder bridges. Articles also discuss concrete decks, foundations, and substructure elements, as well as topics related to design, construction, rehabilitation, and repair of concrete bridges.

In seeking topics for articles, I make a conscious effort to distribute projects and topics around the country and give many engineers opportunities to provide content for *ASPIRE*. I have been impressed

and pleased that engineers, contractors, and others have indeed been willing to write articles, and that the articles are generally well written when we receive them. Indeed, the task of recruiting authors has been quite enjoyable. It has been good to see authors deliver interesting and informative articles, and that the articles provide an opportunity to recognize companies, agencies, and engineers for the work they have done.

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Many very interesting articles have been published in *ASPIRE* over the years, so it is instructive to take a stroll back to the beginning and look at some of the early issues, which are all available on the *ASPIRE* website: www.aspirebridge.org. While you are on the website, you can also sign up for a print subscription (if you are not already a subscriber) or search for specific content across all issues if you are interested in learning more about a particular bridge or topic (use the link on the lower right corner of the home page to access the search function in the phone/tablet version). Additional information related to an article, such as extra photos for project articles or backup calculations for technical articles, may be provided in archived issues or on the website, so please check that resource.

We have a number of regular articles within *ASPIRE*. I'm sure many of you are familiar with them. One that has been especially popular is the LRFD feature that Dr. Dennis Mertz, late professor at the University of Delaware, wrote so capably from the first issue and up to his untimely death in 2016. Dr. Oguzhan “Ozzie” Bayrak, professor at the University of Texas at Austin, has taken over that series and has been doing a great job. We appreciate the contributions to our understanding of the *AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications* and its background, development, and application that we can obtain from these two outstanding engineers.

Another of the regular features that has been a highlight of the magazine is the brief Aesthetics Commentary written by Fred Gottemoeller about one of the issue's featured bridge projects. Over the years, he has done a terrific job giving us insights into aesthetics for bridges and has helped us learn how to make our basic, functional structures complement their surroundings without being extravagant or adding unnecessary ornamentation.

Unlike the *PCI Journal* or *PTI Journal*, *ASPIRE* is not a periodical with peer-reviewed research papers, but its articles do occasionally explore some more complex technical topics. Articles on several such topics have been included in the last few years, including ultra-high-performance concrete (UHPC), the effects of sweep in pretensioned concrete girders, and the current series on concrete anchorage. While these articles take considerably more effort to produce than our typical articles, we hope they have been valuable to our readers.

ASPIRE also provides articles that encourage us as engineers to think about more than just the production of our next bridge. In today's environment, we need to consider resilience, sustainability, and engineering professionalism. We also need to mentor younger engineers who will soon be taking our places.

There are so many good stories to be told about concrete bridges. I wish there were more pages in the magazine so more projects and concepts could be presented. (By the way, the length of the magazine is a function of the amount of ad revenue. *ASPIRE* delivers 14,000 paper copies and has approximately 6000 online readers for each issue. If your company would like to be exposed to over 20,000 bridge engineers, owners, contractors, and suppliers every quarter, please consider purchasing an advertisement in the magazine.) I think it is important to tell these stories so that others can be encouraged and can learn from our experiences, as we also learn from theirs. I encourage each of you to think about projects and topics you could contribute to *ASPIRE*, then put together a team, including younger engineers, to write an article.

It has been my pleasure to be involved with *ASPIRE* for these 25 issues. I look forward to working with many of you as you become authors of articles in future issues. Speaking for all of us on the *ASPIRE* team, we would certainly like the magazine to continue to be the “go-to” resource for concrete bridge concepts, design, and construction. We hope the magazine gives you many ideas to enable you to do a better and more efficient job of designing and building bridges using the amazing material that concrete is. 