



President's Message

RJ Benson

488 nm Argon Laser or Leatherman ARC Multi-Tool?

I am a recycled Officer. I did a couple of tours as Secretary, but I would not have predicted ending up here [again]. The regrets were very few and the rewards were great. This is the last article in my capacity as President of ASCLS-MI. There are a few things to do before I hand over the gavel to Amy. Wait, she already has it. What's wrong with this picture?

The article title? I have extensive experience with obscure analogies, so let me shape this for you. I had written this before I was to participate in the ASCLS Joint Annual Meeting in St. Louis. I wanted to get it done because my ToDo list is surly and has teeth. The original article hinged on the Question, "If you were just starting out as a MLS, would you choose a path where you were highly specialized or would you wish to obtain a broad set of skills?"

I listed some examples from my experience. One was the One Man Toxicology Department in a reference lab where I trained. I don't know how he was able to take time off. Nobody else in the

company could do his job. Another one was the Fix It Guy in one of the hospital settings where I trained [we had a two hospital, specialty laboratory rotation]. The number of instruments and pieces of equipment he resuscitated were impressive. After I became a part of the staff [on midnights] I experienced a Fix It scenario. An analyzer went down. My choices were Do Nothing and the analyzer would be down when the day shift showed up OR try to get help with Tech Support. I was pleasantly surprised to speak with a real person with real experience with our instrument. He had me going through some troubleshooting steps and when he said, "I want you to take a paper clip and touch both terminals on the capacitor to clear any residual charge." I thought about a new scenario where the analyzer would be down when the day shift arrived and how I'd have to genuflect in front of the Supervisor while explaining the use of a paper clip without encouragement or approval. Some of you know that I have a homozygous expression of the *Do Something To Fix This* gene. The paper clip helped keep things running for day shift.

You may be thinking, "RJ, the trip down memory lane does what?" After sitting in on at least three sessions about Artificial Intelligence at the meeting, I recognize things change. I want to share one of the observations of an insightful speaker. She said, "AI is neither. It is not artificial, the analysis and conclusion pathways

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are real. It is not intelligence, it is information. I prefer to think of it as Augmented Information.” Brilliant.

I thought about what my previous examples might look like with AugInfo helping. Ignore, for the moment, the difficulty in verifying/directing this tool. It is being used now and the challenge of controlling it is ongoing. Back to my examples. I think certain automation and decision making would reduce the stark dependence on one man performing Toxicology analysis. What if the analyzer had onboard self analytics to help heal itself? Things change.

There were plenty of discussions regarding the future need of people in this new environment [“The machines are going to take over!”] and the various models of how to make in function as an effective tool. The placement of the Scientist in the decision/control tree had numerous versions. Things change, but my crystal ball says we will have an important role in the laboratory of the future.

Going back to my first draft of this article, I asked if someone said, “You get to pick between learning to become the supervisor of a Reference Laboratory Toxicology Department or the operator of the multi-channel chemistry analyzer, which path do you take?”

My crystal ball has coffee stains and reading it is tough. I believe we will still need specialty training and certification, but I think the broader opportunities will be as a generalist with amazing tools at their disposal.

Before we became ASCLS-MI, we were the Michigan Society for Medical Technology [MSMT]. A woman that worked in a local laboratory was one of our inspiring members. Her name was Pam Agren. If that name sounds

familiar, it is because ASCLS-MI has an award named after her. We had numerous local activities and often were part of the committee for the Annual Meeting. Pam frequently would ask, “What can I do?” and was pleased to get an assignment where she had to learn a new skill set. She took a class in Excel so she could streamline the Annual Meeting Registration. I learned from a colleague that she was the same in the laboratory where she worked. That curiosity served me well. I’ll spare you the details of the career path, but actively seeking to broaden my skill set opened a lot of doors.

My parting advice is to stay curious and jump in if something new is offered, because, well things change. I am curious how this plays out. Oh, truth be told, I own the Leatherman ARC Multi-Tool.



“AI is neither. It is not artificial, the analysis and conclusion pathways are real. It is not intelligence, it is information. I prefer to think of it as Augmented Information.”

JAM Recap from President RJ Benson



This year's ASCLS Joint annual Meeting was held at the St. Louis Union Station Hotel. The conference saw a jump in participants from last year. The sessions were inspiring. The exhibitor booths were sold out. The meeting facility was massive and historic. I checked in at the Registration and headed toward my room. I walked, turned down a hallway, walked, turned down a hallway, walked. The workout feature on my smart-watch automatically activated, thinking I had forgotten to tell it about the hike I was on.



The Michigan Delegates (pictured below) participated in Government sessions, both in person and virtually. The members that chose to attend virtually said they were pleased with their ability to participate [even while on a train].



The only barrier to a better experience was the heat. Exploring the nearby venues was difficult. I saw the Gateway Arch during my departing flight. It would have been about a mile, round trip from the hotel. I opted for an air-conditioned sports bar with soccer on. I had no idea that soccer had such a history in St. Louis. As my cab was approaching the hotel, I asked the driver what that sizeable stadium was. I knew it wasn't Busch Stadium where the Cardinals play. He said "It's Energizer Park, our soccer stadium." It seats a mere 22,423. When you stepped into one of two nearby sports bars that had at least 15 sheet of plywood sized television screens with the World Cup games playing, the enthusiasm was from a knowledgeable audience.

While I was attending the Awards Ceremony, I watched numerous people recognized for their YEARS of generous service, recipients of scholarships and competition winners. As the hosts worked their way down the agenda, they came to "**Political Action Committee Fundraising Award**". They listed the third place winner, the second place winner, then said, "The First Place winner is Michigan, RJ Benson, President."



I walked up to the stage, accepted the certificate with our Winner status, then walked over to have my picture taken with ASCLS President Kyle Riding. As I returned to sit with Suzanne Butch, I said, "THAT was unexpected." She

said, "Were you notified?" I said, "No. This doesn't feel right." Suzanne is on the ASCLS Political Action Committee, was to attend a PAC meeting later in the day and said she would ask for clarification/verification. When I met with her for an evening function, she confirmed that the award was not a mistake. I don't know who to thank, but you know who you are, so THANK YOU.

A standing tradition at the Awards Ceremony is to recognize those that have served on the Board. The Past President comes off the Board, displaced by new Officers, and is escorted from the front stage by members of their State Society back to join the "regular" members. This years throng of escorts was sizable and I thought it a bit odd that one member of the escort team looked like Elvis [you may have to look him up with Google]. Then music came on. It was an Elvis song call "Return to sender".



Next year, just as a gentle reminder, the meeting will be June 13 – 17 in Buffalo, NY.

[Save the date 2027 JAM](#)



ASCLS-Michigan Summer Picnic!



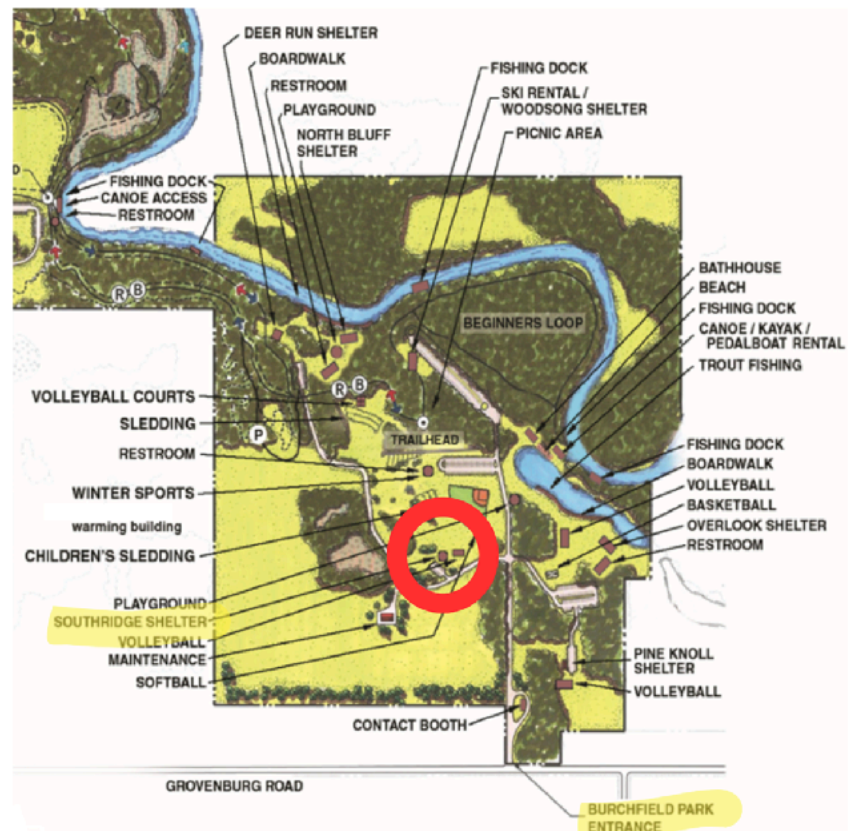
Michigan Laboratory Professionals, Students, Families, and Friends - you are invited to kick off the new membership year with us at the ASCLS-Michigan Summer Picnic on August 15!

Come join ASCLS-MI volunteers, members, and other laboratory professionals from around the state to enjoy some beautiful summer weather, celebrate our profession, and look forward to the exciting things in store for us in the upcoming membership year! All laboratory professionals, students, friends, and families welcome! This year's Summer Social will be held on **Saturday, August 15 2:00-6:00pm at Burchfield Park in Holt, Michigan** at the Southridge Picnic Shelter near the softball diamond. The address is 881 Grovenburg Road, Holt, MI, 48842.

Volleyball and lawn games will be available near the picnic shelter; additional areas of the park feature playgrounds, disc golf courses, a beach, canoe and kayak rentals, hiking and biking trails, a softball diamond, and a stocked fishing pond. Dogs are allowed on a leash that is no longer than six feet.

There is no registration cost to attend, but there is a \$7 vehicle entrance fee when you arrive to the park (\$5 for Ingham County residents).

ASCLS-MI will be providing grilling supplies, tableware, hot dogs, and any other supplies we may need but if you have any specific items that you would prefer, feel free to bring them. Please consider bringing a side dish to pass or any specifically desired grilling items or beverages. Beer, seltzers, and wine, in original containers of two liters or less, are permitted.



If you do plan to attend, please let us know at <https://www.ascls-michigan.org/events/summer-social> We'd also appreciate it if you'd share the invitation with your colleagues to spread the word! We hope you'll be able to join us for this afternoon of recreation, camaraderie, and summer memories with our #LabFam!



ASCLS-Michigan Annual Meeting Venue Set for 2027 and 2028

The ASCLS-Michigan Annual Conference planning committee is excited to share the dates of our 2027 and 2028 Annual Conferences! Please save **April 11–13, 2027** and **April 9–11, 2028**. Both conferences will take place at Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort (SECR) in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

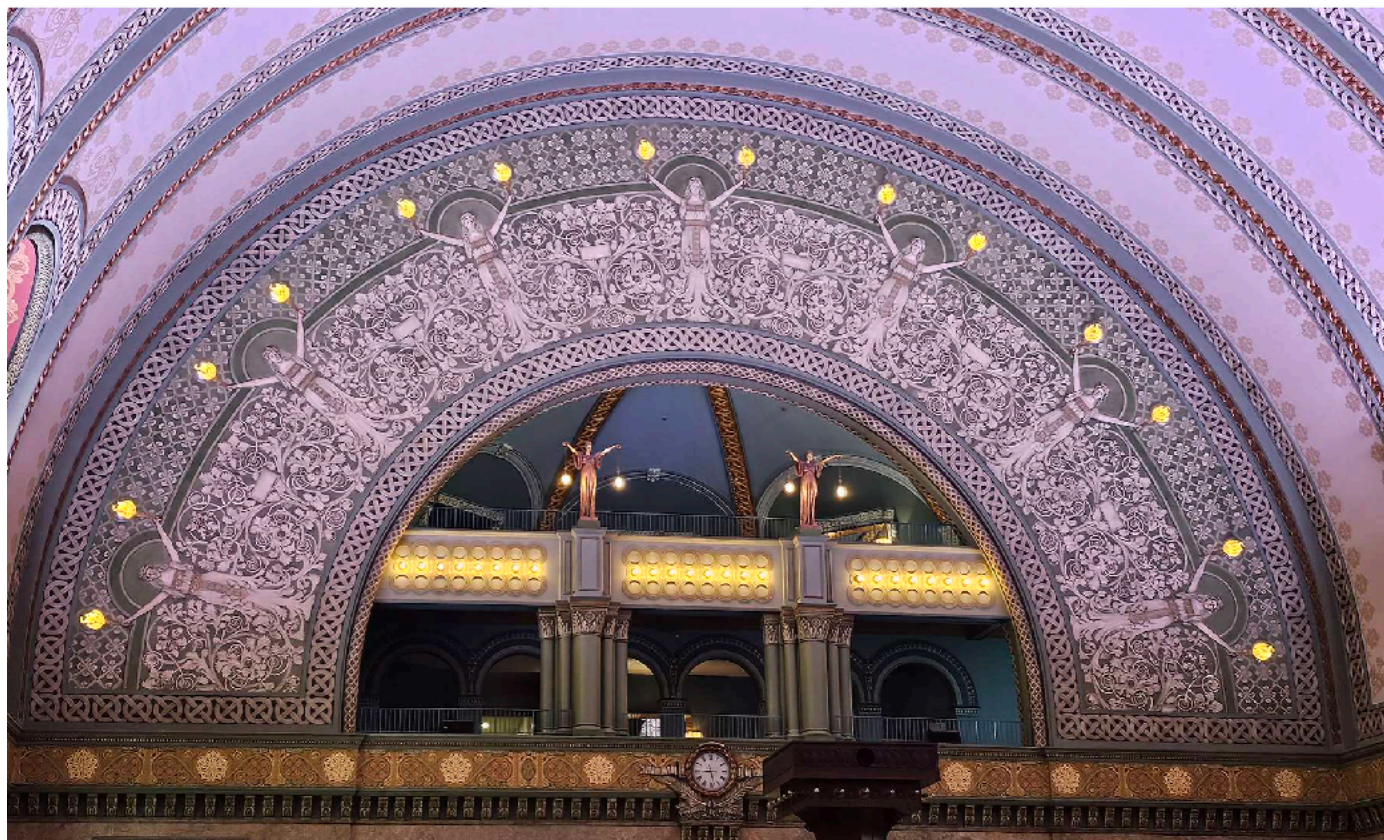


You may have been aware that the Board was discussing the possibility of going to an "every other year" conference. At the membership meeting, members expressed a strong desire to continue meeting annually. The Board heard that feedback, and the conference committee is pleased to confirm that we have secured contracts to continue holding an Annual Conference.

However, **we still need your help!**

- If you have a speaker suggestion that you haven't already shared, please complete an [ASCLS-Michigan Session Proposal](#). **And if you'd like to consider being a speaker yourself, we'd love to hear from you** - this is one of our greatest volunteer needs relating to the conference!
- Please share information about the conference with colleagues who may not yet be ASCLS members so they can also save the date and make plans to attend.
- If you haven't yet, make sure to [renew your membership](#) before July 31 so that you'll stay informed about the conference and other ASCLS/ASCLS-Michigan happenings throughout the membership year!

We look forward to seeing you April 11–13, 2027, in Mount Pleasant!



Architectural feature photographed at the JAM in St. Louis by RJ Benson



**American
Society for
Clinical
Laboratory
Science
Michigan**

ASCLS-Michigan *Newslinks*

A quarterly publication of the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science-Michigan. This newsletter is available on our [website](#), distributed via email link to members and posted on the ASCLS-Michigan Facebook page.

Intended Content

Member submissions:

Articles focusing on the medical laboratory profession are encouraged, including case studies, workplace activities, district events, committee reports, technology developments, awards and any other relevant and necessary information.

Non-member submissions:

Educational Institutions and Commercial Organizations: [Sponsors of Annual Meeting](#) will be recognized and may submit materials for approval by ASCLS-Michigan leadership.

Deadlines for articles are the 30th of the months of April, July, October & January. Articles must have name of author. Anonymous letters will not be published. The editor reserves the right to edit all materials submitted for publication. Articles appearing in *Newslinks* represent the opinion of the author and may not represent the opinion of the society.

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Membership: Join ASCLS-Michigan by visiting the ASCLS web site:
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www.ascls-michigan.org

for a complete listing and contact information for all ASCLS-MI board members and a wealth of other information on the Society.