



from the president

**Doug Simpson**  
President

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## Dear NAME Colleagues,

**A**s AAM implements its strategic plan, *The Spark*, discussions continue about how to best structure the relationship between AAM and its many Professional Networks (13 Standing Professional Committees—including NAME—and nine Professional Interest Committees). The Professional Networks (PNs) are not independent legal entities but are committees under the umbrella of AAM. Their missions are clearly aligned and yet they have their own Executive Boards and function largely autonomously. These are a few of the questions being considered: What relationship best leverages the strengths of the Professional Networks? How do we encourage wider membership in the Professional Networks among AAM members? What organizational structure most efficiently utilizes AAM staff time and the volunteer energies of the PNs?

I believe one of the core strengths of the PNs is their ability to harness tremendous volunteer talent within the AAM membership. In contrast to AAM, Professional Networks are, by their very nature, smaller groups that come together around specific interests. This smaller size makes PNs excellent vehicles to channel members' desire to get involved and to contribute.

NAME enjoys a strong volunteer base. Within NAME, members volunteer to do everything from planning events like the NAME Party at the national conference, to organizing workshops like the Creativity and Collaboration Retreat, to hosting student Fellows, to planning networking events at the regional conferences. These activities create value for AAM members, providing professional learning and opportunities to network.

So what motivates members to volunteer? At the heart, I believe there two reasons. Members want to give back to the profession, and they want to develop relationships with others who share their passion for exhibits. But how do we create a satisfying volunteer opportunities? At a recent NAME Board Meeting, one member shared this observation, "At our regular jobs we are usually told what to do. When volunteering, we gain control over what we do. We are motivated by the empowerment we are given." I believe this empowering of volunteers is a critical ingredient in NAME's ability to harness so much creative talent.

We can always do better though. We can do better at helping members "plug into" the right volunteer opportunity. If you would like to volunteer, please contact your NAME Regional Representative (see the listing in the back of this journal or NAME's website). We would also like to encourage a conversation on this topic. What have been your most satisfying volunteer experiences with NAME? What could NAME do better to encourage more members to share their talents? NAME has a listserv on Yahoo Groups where you can share your thoughts. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NAME-AAM/> to join.

One example of the kind of contributions NAME members make to the field is upcoming—it is Creativity and Collaboration 2011: An Exhibitions Retreat, held in beautiful Chautauqua, New York, October 28-30, 2011. We're excited to announce some of the instigators:

**Centralia**—a bold, 4-man (and a musician) Manhattan-based improv group, who blow the doors off of what's "legal" in spontaneous performance.

**Rufus Butler Seder**—an optical artist behind some of the most popular New York Times best-selling children's books.

To find out more and register, go to NAME's or AAM's website!