

# Edstrom Update

NEWS / INFORMATION / INSTRUCTION ISSUE 2 • 2014

## FEATURE:

AALAS Vice President Elect Discusses Volunteering Within The Industry

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## THE HUMAN ELEMENT

# Paying It Forward

A conversation with Dr. Laura Conour, Vice President Elect of AALAS, on her new position and the rewards of volunteering within the industry.



"I always wanted to be a vet, ever since I saw Dr. Doolittle on television and the movie Born Free." This was Dr. Laura Conour's response when asked how she got started with laboratory animal science. Laura is

the Director of Lab Animal Resources at Princeton University and is the incoming vice president for AALAS. I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Laura to discuss her background, new position with AALAS, and advice on volunteering within the industry.

I was surprised to learn that Laura grew up in a small town in Illinois, population 3,200, and spent her childhood taking care of the neighbor's pets. Laura got her first

taste of animal medicine by volunteering at the local veterinary office, a position that eventually turned into a job. After graduating high school, she set out to junior college to start her course work to prepare for

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veterinary school. She had it in her mind to practice as a clinical vet, however with her first course at the University of Illinois in laboratory animal science, and with an interest in research, she realized she could blend these two passions. This course

changed her perspective and she was hooked.

As Laura transitioned into lab animal science, she discovered right away that community was a huge part of the field. Some of her fondest memories are from working with her colleagues at the University of Illinois where she managed a finch lab and was responsible for 'rounding up' escaped mice from next door. She quickly learned that she would not only gain valuable experience and an excellent education, but would develop professional relationships and friendships that would last forever. It was at this early time that Laura dove into volunteering with the idea of paying it forward.

While speaking with Laura, she made it very clear that the lab animal community is a very 'tight-knit' group who rely on each

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other and the best way to contribute to this community is to volunteer and get involved.

Laura believes there are many benefits to volunteering. On a professional level, you illustrate that you are dedicated to the field and willing to go that extra mile. Furthermore, you develop many professional connections who serve as invaluable resources as you progress throughout your career. More importantly, you get a sense of personal satisfaction, fulfillment and the opportunity to influence the future of the industry as AALAS consists of about 90% volunteers. Laura says, "The friendships that you develop may be the biggest reward to your volunteering venture. My colleagues are my friends and when I need to talk I can pick up the phone and know that the person on the other line will get it."

Although you will spend a lot of time working for the industry while volunteering, you may be surprised how much you will learn about yourself. As you sit in meetings and converse with individuals you have never met and who come from different experiences and backgrounds, you will be exposed to many different ideas, perspectives, and processes. You learn that there are many ways to come to the same conclusion and your negotiation skills and patience will be improved.

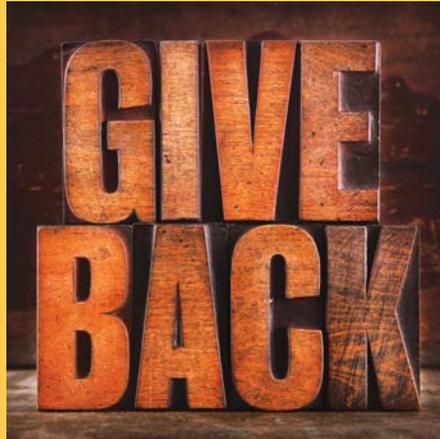
Laura's volunteer experience has taught her not to jump to conclusions. Everyone will speak and everyone will listen; compromise becomes very important and it is an excellent life skill to take with you outside the meeting room and beyond the industry. Everyone who volunteers is very passionate about what they do and their own ideas. As Laura says, "if you take the time to listen, you may learn something new and the way you think about something may actually change."

Listening to Laura's enthusiasm and passion, I was eager to find out how she plans to use her elected position to improve the industry. As part of the AALAS executive board she hopes to bridge the gap that she sees between the veterinarian community and the non-vet community and to bring everyone together to work towards a common goal. She also wants to expand the

volunteer pool within AALAS, hoping to get more people involved in the organization. She is very passionate about getting as many people involved as possible. "There is a place for everyone. The only qualifications

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are a willingness to participate and having the time to commit," she says. "Keep your time in perspective when considering a volunteer position; be realistic and honest with yourself when



committing your time. Do not over commit and do not be afraid to say no. You must be able to balance your work and personal life and take this into consideration when giving yourself more responsibilities." Most importantly, she was very empathetic in expressing that as a leader, you must be able to give volunteers an out from volunteering when they need it.

Laura offers that the best advice for industry professionals to start their volunteer path is locally, where there are many opportunities to help. Reach out to your (AALAS) branch and see where help is needed. It can be overwhelming to try and work at the national level first, so start small, particularly with groups of people you may know. Once you have some experience and feel ready, look at district opportunities and then national opportunities.

National AALAS also offers educational workshops so you can learn how to get involved. Leadership 'bootcamp' is offered at the National AALAS Meeting each year and many districts have a mini-leadership bootcamp. If you are looking for a national opportunity, a form can be filled out online that makes it easier to get on the volunteer list ([www.aalas.org/get-involved](http://www.aalas.org/get-involved)). Lastly, it is important to network with other industry professionals. Speak to individuals in your local branch who are leaders and don't be afraid to ask questions. While AALAS is a professional association, Laura truly feels that the association "gives us a sense of community and is a source of invaluable information, so get involved!"

#### **ABOUT DR. LAURA CONOUR:**

Laura attended veterinary school at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and completed her postdoc at Washington University in St. Louis. Her first industry position was as a clinical vet at SmithKlineBeechman where she later became a manager, overseeing the development of their transgenic line. She then moved on for an opportunity with Charles River Laboratories and became the Senior Director of Laboratory Animal Medicine, where she started their phenotyping lab.

In 2011, Laura became the Director of Lab Animal Resources at Princeton University and feels honored to have been given this opportunity. She felt an immediate connection to staff, department and community when she arrived. When asked how she feels about her colleagues, Dr. Conour states, "I feel lucky to have my staff and couldn't ask for a better management team."

#### **VOLUNTEER HISTORY:**

Upon completing her education and accepting a position out east (US), she immediately looked into volunteering and her associate Deb Benner, from Animal Specialist and Provisions, happily took her in. At the start, Laura assumed she was attending a regular branch meeting and found out it was actually a board meeting – and thus her volunteer service began. She served multiple positions on the DVBAALAS board before moving

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# VetsRoll, Inc.® – Giving Back To Those Who Served

For some people, volunteering is just second nature. Mark Strasser, Edstrom production manager and an Edstrom team member for 35 years, is one such man. From rescuing people from burning buildings as a volunteer firefighter to honoring Veterans and coaching youth sports, Mark is devoted to helping others. "It's been my life."

One of his greatest passions is a special charity called VetsRoll, Inc.® – a 100% volunteer, grassroots organization dedicated to honoring World War II and Korean War Veterans and the women who provided stateside support – Rosie the Riveters – by offering safe ground transportation and an enjoyable experience to visit their war memorials and other related sights in and around Washington D.C. The four-day bus trip gives these heroes the long overdue gift of thanks for their incredible sacrifices made in the name of freedom so many years ago.

Brothers John and Mark Finnegan founded VetsRoll on February 1, 2010 in memory of their father, "Cy" Thomas Nicholas Finnegan, U.S. Navy motor machinist who served in the South Pacific from 1944-1946 and died before having the opportunity to view the memorial built in honor of the WWII generation.

Strasser's involvement with VetsRoll began in 2012 when he applied to be a member of the medical team. It was an experience he was fortunate to share with his 85-year-old father, George Strasser, a Korean War Veteran who served in the Army Artillery First Cavalry Division. In subsequent years, Strasser has taken on the role of bus leader. "It's a labor of love," he says, "and also a lot of fun."

The VetsRoll mission is an urgent one as many WWII Veterans and "Rosies" are in their mid-eighties to mid-nineties and passing away at the alarming rate of 900 to 1,000 per day. "Our oldest Veteran on the

2013 trip was ninety-seven," recalls Strasser. "This year, we had a handful of 94 and 95-year-olds."

Approximately 350 people fill ten coach buses on the annual excursion occurring the week before Memorial Day weekend (May). Two hundred of these are Veterans; the rest are volunteers. A solid support staff of emergency medical technicians, paramedics, physical therapists, pharmacists and firemen ensure these elderly Veterans are well taken care of while away from home.

VetsRoll is a regional program with primary fundraising events occurring throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois; however, Veterans from all over the country are welcome to apply.

"Twenty-one states were represented this year," says Strasser. The approximate cost per Veteran is \$600, and Veterans and Rosies do not pay anything. Therefore, the VetsRoll adventure wouldn't be possible without help from countless volunteers and generous donations. "Every single day, there's a fundraiser somewhere."

## A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

Although they begin the trip as strangers, it doesn't take long for the Veterans to bond. "The expedition to Washington D.C. gives Veterans the opportunity to rekindle previous friendships and strike up new ones with people in whom they share a common thread," states Mark Finnegan. "Some Veterans have never been able to talk about their war experiences until now." When each Veteran receives dozens of thank you letters written by school children and family members during Monday night's "mail call" at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, apprehension about



Mark Strasser (left) and Cliff Bushberger (right) present Mark Finnegan of VetsRoll with a check.



leaving home and loved ones starts to dissolve.

"Our first stop in D.C. is the Arlington National Cemetery where we witness the Changing of the Guard," says Strasser. "Eighth-grade classes from all over the country are visiting the city at the same time we are, and when our Veterans leave the ceremony, these young people line the sidewalks and applaud until the last Veteran is gone. It's absolutely amazing. And so are the people on this trip."

"I've met a man who flew 151 missions in WWII and another who worked on the Manhattan Project. I've witnessed beautiful moments such as a Korean War Veteran finding his best friend's name on the Vietnam Wall, which was his sole purpose for going on the trip. The two served in Korea together, and his friend was one of the first 100 people killed in Vietnam. It was just that he was able to reach up and touch the name, and I saw energy released in that moment. I never understood the power of the Wall until that day."

A state police escort guides the VetsRoll caravan from Pennsylvania to Beloit, Wisconsin where the Veterans are treated to a homecoming they say is, "Like nothing I've ever seen; it is absolutely fantastic." Thousands of people are there to greet them amongst a parade buzzing with motorcycles, fire engines, and fireworks.

The Veterans come home changed men and women. "My dad

and I are much closer as a result of this trip," shares Strasser. "It made him a different person, and I hear that same thing all the time from other people whose family member made the journey. The program is a phenomenal way for these Veterans to make peace with the past and just 'let it go.'"

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT VITAL TO EDSTROM

Edstrom is proud to support VetsRoll and many other local charities. "It's important for me to be a part of a company that believes wholeheartedly in giving back to its community," Strasser says. "They've held raffles and luncheons to raise money for VetsRoll. They also host food drives, school supply drives, Christmas toy drives, blood drives and more throughout the year. Since 2007, we've collected enough blood to save more than 800 lives!"

"We don't move down the road as an individual, as a group, as a society or as a country if someone doesn't do something for nothing," says Strasser. "If we don't give of ourselves, we don't know what it's like to help someone out or give that person something they never would've had before. That's why I love being a part of VetsRoll. It means everything to these Veterans."

To learn more about VetsRoll please visit [www.vetsroll.org](http://www.vetsroll.org).

## EDSTROM BUSINESS NEWS

# Bringing Industry Leading Automated Watering Systems and Critical Monitoring to Southern Asia



The quest for scientific discovery and the campaign to eradicate disease are challenges faced worldwide. Across the globe, research facilities are being created to accept the charge of making life improving breakthroughs that alleviate, enliven, and heal. A region that continues to expand its footprint in bioscience is Southern and Southeast Asia.

To aid in the distribution of Edstrom's industry-leading automated watering and critical monitoring systems to this burgeoning market, Edstrom has partnered with the ITS Group. ITS has been in the business of providing scientific products and services to the region for over 35 years. We are very excited about the opportunities presented by this relationship for the scientific community in Southern Asia. We asked Dennis Tan, ITS Business Development Director, to help us learn more about the company and the research being performed in this very promising region of the globe.

#### Dennis, how long have you been with ITS?

I have been with ITS for 6 years as a director of the company, focusing on business development and turnkey projects business in the region. Prior to joining ITS, I was practicing as an architect in Sydney-Australia, Vancouver-Canada and Dubai-UAE.

#### Why did ITS choose to represent Edstrom?

ITS is a leading provider of turnkey solutions for Animal Research facilities in Southeast Asia. We have completed many AAALAC certified projects in this region, providing services from consultancy, design & build, to the supply of all equipment required for research and cage processing. As Edstrom is by far the leader in the niche market of Animal Watering System and Environmental Monitoring, ITS partnering up with Edstrom will provide a strong platform to bring this technology to clients in Southeast Asia. With Edstrom's knowledge and ITS's reach in the market, I believe it will be a mutually beneficial business relationship.

#### What can you tell us about the animal research industry in South Asia/Southeast Asia? How is the region growing, and what types of scientific studies are being investigated?

The animal research industry is quite varied in South / Southeast Asia, with India and Singapore leading the way in many areas of research and development. Many other countries are quickly improving their capabilities and are in the process of planning or building new animal facilities. The growth in India has been steady over the last 10 years, whilst Singapore has experienced very strong and fast growth.

The rest of the Southeast Asian market is growing slowly and steadily, with Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia showing the most promise for future growth.

Much of the research in South and Southeast Asia is focusing on basic research and teaching in various therapeutic areas, including: cancer, immunology, infectious diseases, metabolic diseases and nutrition. Genetic manipulation and the use of transgenic animals has grown in India and Singapore, whilst it is still in very early stages in many other countries. One of the biggest research areas of growth is in the field of infectious diseases, with many facilities now focusing on emerging tropical diseases in Asia, such as H5N1, H1N1, Malaria, Dengue, etc.



**What gives you confidence that there is growth potential for automated animal watering and critical (environmental) monitoring in these markets? Have you seen any trends indicating there is current or future demand?**

The countries in Southeast Asia are at different stages of funding for research and hence there has been different requirements for the quality and scale of these facilities. I would say that in the last 15 years, Singapore has had the highest allocation of funds for research and that is reflected in the quality of research facilities. Edstrom has won several contracts for AWS and Monitoring in Singapore and has built a great reference for the rest of S.E. Asia. In recent years, we have seen a growing trend in the other countries stepping up on their investment for research and have seen an overall growth in facilities being built to international standards. I firmly believe that with the right marketing strategy, there will be an increasing demand for Edstrom's technology especially in Automated Watering Systems.

**With representatives in various countries in the region, what are some of the cultural differences from country to country that you face and how do you adapt to these differences?**

ITS has direct offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Philippines. Although we are all in Southeast Asia, there are certain cultural differences in the way business is done in each of these countries. How ITS chooses to manage this is by hiring staff local to those countries and have a management group based in Singapore, looking after the business development strategies in the region. With this, we can cross leverage on resource and knowledge sharing across the region as well as applying our local service approach.

**How do countries in this region view US companies and their products?**

As mentioned above, each of these countries are at a

different stage in their research investment level. Generally, US companies are regarded highly for their quality, innovation and technology. These superior features do come with a higher price tag and not every client is willing to pay for this. This is why a good partner local to this region is important in order to educate and promote these high quality products.

**Are there challenges working with US companies? Are there communication barriers or differences in business culture?**

ITS as a company, has been working with US companies for over 35 years and having the head office based out of Singapore, where English is the first language and being well



exposed to western businesses, we find that it is relatively straight forward to work with US companies in terms of culture and communication. This experience may differ for other distributors with lesser experience or coming from a non-English speaking country.

**What advice do you have for companies that are looking to sell products/services internationally – particularly in southern Asia?**

As each of these countries in Southeast Asia are culturally different, especially from the perspective of a foreigner, it would be important to select a good partner that has a strong reach and experience in the said industry to promote the products. These sort of partners can add value in terms of identifying and qualifying leads, marketing and bridging the information transfer between the principals and the local customers.

*Edstrom would like to thank Dennis Tan for this interview. You can learn more about ITS Global at [www.its-asia.com](http://www.its-asia.com).*

## QUESTION & ANSWER

# Ask Update

**Q:** What is the difference between the A160 drinking valve with the extended stem versus the recessed stem? I would like to more easily identify my recessed stem A160 drinking valves.

**A:** Mice and rats can easily drink from either of the A160 stem lengths recessed or protruding stem. The recessed stem design was created to reduce the ability of a larger size rat to lay next to the valve and actuate a protruding stem. Based on customer feedback requesting that it be easier to identify which of the two valves is which, Edstrom is adding an engraved "R" on the valve.



Do you have a question for the Edstrom Update Newsletter? Contact us at [update@edstrom.com](mailto:update@edstrom.com)

*(Continued from Dr. Laura Conour article)*

to Massachusetts. Once in Shrewsbury, she quickly became involved in the New England branch and became the branch president in 2009 and later chaired the Quad meeting.

At a national level, her first appointment was in 2002 on the program committee for which she served 6 years. Next, she was appointed to the ILAM committee and served two intermittent terms. Finally, Laura became the District 1 trustee in 2010 and after moving to Princeton, ran for the AALAS executive board and was elected Vice President elect in 2013.

*Edstrom thanks Laura for her participation in the Edstrom Update Newsletter. This article was authored by Gina Ward, Edstrom Sales Consultant.*

## EDSTROM PRODUCT NEWS

# Keeping A Natural Rhythm With Edstrom Light Control

The integrity of scientific studies rest with the ability to control factors that may influence research studies including physical variables such as light. More is being understood about how light impacts biological research, and why moderating its presence is critical. Light impacts circadian rhythms that trigger the onset of a variety of responses in organisms. Aquatic, avian, insect, and mammalian species have demonstrated physiological and behavioral responses to the presence or absence of light. These responses are not always overt, and may affect the subjects' biochemistry. Realizing that light can introduce a volatile unknown into an experiment makes it crucial that the day/light cycle for the subject species is understood. Once this pattern is known and quantified, it must be controlled and monitored.



### THE KEY TO LIGHTING CONTROL AND MONITORING – DESIGN FOR THE VIVARIUM

Generic light control systems are designed for human environments, and their primary purpose is to create energy efficiency and cost savings. When the architecture is designed for scientific studies based on animal physiology and responsiveness, the priority shifts to foster the intrinsic needs of the animal. Light attributes like intensity level, photoperiod, and spectral content all contribute to the well-being of the animal and must be considered in the effort to meet their anatomic and behavioral needs.

Among the light control solutions that have been developed by Edstrom is the Advanced Light Module, or ALM. The ALM facilitates the moderation of light cycles by allowing them to be scheduled with software as required by the animals' circadian clock, or as necessitated by the investigator. The ALM is a powerful tool for generating and maintaining a proper day/night light cycle required for the specific research being performed in a particular room.

### CONTROL – THE VIVARIUM LIGHT CYCLE IN NATURAL HARMONY

Based on a 24-hour cycle, the ALM can offer four different programmable light states: *low level*, *high level*, *night lighting*, and *lights off*. This presents a critical advantage over a generic all-or-nothing, on/off design and allows for a more natural simulation of light. The ALM allows staff to alter the light state manually within the room for a predetermined amount of time. A light blink safety feature can be used to provide advanced warning that the room lighting is about to shut off.

### MONITORING – ALWAYS SEE THE LIGHT

To allow for the record keeping transparency required of most labs, Edstrom provides independent light monitoring. With independent light monitoring, light state records are generated based on in-room readings. Histories are recorded and archived based on the data collected by photocells. The data set can then be produced on demand via the critical monitoring software. If the existing light state deviates from the scheduled light state, an alarm is triggered and sent through the critical monitoring software to assigned individuals by means of email or phone. With the ALM, there is no longer a need to be concerned that lights were inadvertently left on for a prolonged period - affecting animals and corrupting the research.

To view an Edstrom white paper discussing the effectiveness of critical monitoring and vivarium lighting visit [www.edstrom.com/documents/](http://www.edstrom.com/documents/).

## Edstrom Update

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