

editor's note



AS WE TOURED THE TITANIC MUSEUM during a recent family vacation in Branson, Mo., I couldn't help but think about the difference between walking through the exhibits and watching a documentary on television.

My daughter, Julia, absolutely loved the museum. She stopped to touch various artifacts, to chat with the staff, and to read sign after sign after sign. In contrast, I'm skeptical I could get her to watch a documentary on the disaster, even though it would have conveyed much more information in a shorter amount of time. The difference is entirely experiential. One is active involvement, one is passive; one involves moving, the other sitting; and one allows you to interact with others, while the other offers very limited opportunities.

Most importantly, I believe she retained more information from having visited the museum. I'm certain seeing, in person, the size of a third-class stateroom had more of an impact than seeing one on a television screen. And being able to talk with others—whether museum employees or other visitors—completes the experience. (Plus, there were no distractions. When I attend a webinar at my desk, I'm often interrupted by a phone call or someone stopping by my office.)

Unfortunately, more and more often we're all turning to the impersonal virtual world to the exclusion of in-person experiences. At AISC, we now have many more attendees at our webinars than we have at our in-person seminars. And while attendees at NASCC: The Steel Conference still outnumber web participants, the latter is growing much faster than the former.

The reasons for the growth in screen time are obvious. Registration is often less expensive, there's less time out of the office, it's more convenient, and there's no travel expense. (A really disturbing trend is that increasingly, design firms are not only declining

to pay for continuing education but are also requiring staff to take vacation time to attend seminars.)

And while clearly there is an educational benefit to attending a continuing education program remotely, I'm concerned that something is lost in the process. The richness of the experience is diminished. The knowledge gained is less. Most importantly, what I think of as the auxiliary learning, disappears. The auxiliary learning is what you get from casual conversations with your peers; from being able to interact directly with speakers; and from the inevitable contacts you make at a live event. I know I've learned more over the years from these casual conversations, whether with someone like George Wendt on bending steel (see People to Know on page 66) or Drew Davis about the future of printed magazines.

By all means continue to take webinars. But please, please don't neglect in-person events. Go to your local SEA or fabricator association meeting. Attend a SteelDay event this fall (September 28—visit www.steelday.org for updated information). And if possible, attend national events such as NASCC: The Steel Conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Melnick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

SCOTT MELNICK
EDITOR

MSC
MODERN STEEL CONSTRUCTION

Editorial Offices

1 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 700
Chicago, IL 60601
312.670.2400 tel
312.896.9022 fax

Editorial Contacts

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Scott L. Melnick
312.670.8314
melnick@modernsteel.com

SENIOR EDITOR
Geoff Weisenberger
312.670.8316
weisenberger@modernsteel.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Tasha Weiss
312.670.5439
weiss@modernsteel.com

DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING

Areti Carter
312.670.5427
aretic@modernsteel.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Kristin Egan
312.670.8313
egan@modernsteel.com

AISC Officers

CHAIRMAN
William B. Bourne, III

VICE CHAIRMAN
Jeffrey E. Dave, P.E.

TREASURER
Stephen E. Porter

SECRETARY & GENERAL
COUNSEL
David B. Ratterman

PRESIDENT
Roger E. Ferch, P.E.

VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Charles J. Carter, S.E., P.E., Ph.D.

VICE PRESIDENT
Jacques Cattani

VICE PRESIDENT
John P. Cross, P.E.

VICE PRESIDENT
Scott L. Melnick

Advertising Contact

Account Manager
Louis Gurthet
231.228.2274 tel
231.228.7759 fax
gurthet@modernsteel.com

For advertising information, contact Louis Gurthet or visit www.modernsteel.com

Address Changes and Subscription Concerns

312.670.5444 tel
312.893.2253 fax
admin@modernsteel.com

Reprints

Betsy White
The Reprint Outsource, Inc.
717.394.7350
bwhite@reprintoutsource.com