



Photo: PCI

## OPEN Minds, More Accessibility!

William Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

I frequently meet people that inspire me to think differently about helping myself and others remain positive and focused. In my editorial in the Winter 2015 issue of *ASPIRE*,™ I wrote asking the question: Managing or Just Hanging on through Change? Recently, someone stopped me and explained that they really liked the three new additions to *ASPIRE*: contractor's profiles, concrete bridge technology articles, and the professor's perspective. They went on to say that positive change is necessary for keeping people engaged.

The articles in *ASPIRE* are selected by the Editorial Advisory Board that works to find innovative and informative topics. I wondered how other professional journals and magazines keep their energy high and their teams moving forward.


I recently read the book, *Digital Outcasts: Moving Technology Forward Without Leaving People Behind* by Kel Smith. The term "digital outcasts" was introduced by researchers from the University of Sussex, England, as a description of a group of technology users that do not keep up with technology advances due to their disabilities. In the very near term, author Smith suggests better accessibility through applications (apps) for iPads, tablets, and other devices that will improve the quality of life for the physically or mentally disabled. These kinds of changes will also identify a whole host of new challenges. The book is viewed by many in the technology arena as a game-changing concept, which makes a compelling case for universal design rather than discrete user-based solutions.

Among other things, the book brought to mind the efforts of the AASHTO Subcommittee on Bridges and Structures Technical Committee on Concrete (T-10) to completely reorganize Chapter 5 (concrete structures) of the *LRF Design Specifications*. The committee is in the first round of this reorganization (and rethinking). While the

engineering community is well-rooted in physical sciences, the medical and soft science professions can teach us a lot. Yes, I have heard that we "left brainers" are good with math and that "right brainers" are great with the creative arts. In T-10's efforts, it will take both! The next decade of changes will bring new creative tools for people to gather and understand information. These likely will come from other professions.

This cross-over concept here is captured in the name of Smith's company: Anikto, which is the Greek word for OPEN. He strives for more accessibility and his efforts to educate software and hardware developers is paying off for everyone. Imagine a design code that is technically accurate and unified for a broader range of concrete bridge types. What a model worth following.

Industries' technical organizations and associations, in a somewhat altruistic fashion, work to engage various people and groups and to provide broad access to data, tools, parametric studies, sample projects, and very specialized code interpretations. Sharing these findings creates a better built environment. In the Winter 2013 *ASPIRE* Editorial, I quoted an association president telling a group that, "those that show up help make the rules" and I concluded my editorial in the Winter 2015 edition with a discussion of how addressing change will result in accomplishment. The LRF design philosophy has opened a new framework for bridge design code provisions. Additionally, the next decade will see many changes in concrete and concrete materials as we know them today.

To conclude these eclectic thoughts, I want to challenge our collective bridge community to further OPEN our minds and intellectual wisdom in broadly and routinely sharing the knowledge and tools needed to encourage design with the most versatile material in the construction community: Concrete! 



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A close-up of precast concrete variable-depth girders for the Flagler Memorial Bridge replacement in West Palm Beach, Fla. The bridge is being constructed by PCL. Photo: PCL.

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