

# ICRI SALUTES OUR MANAGEMENT COMPANIES' CONTRIBUTIONS: 1988-2013

BY MONICA M. ROURKE

## WHAT IS A MANAGEMENT COMPANY?

**T**here are more than 25,000 national associations and 65,000 local, state, and regional associations in the United States. These organizations employ more than 500,000 professionals. They are engaged in the profession of association management.

Association management is a distinct field of management because of the unique environment of associations. Associations are unique in that their “owners” are dues-paying members. Members also govern their association management team through an elected Board of Directors along with committees, technical activities groups, and other elected units. Typically, the Board of Directors selects, retains, and evaluates the management company’s Executive Director and his or her paid staff. This hired group of individuals is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organization.

The association’s Executive Director is a paid employee and plays a vital role in minimizing the risks and obstacles the association faces during the course of managing the organization. He or she is the volunteer-governed organization’s single-most crucial staff resource and consultant.

He or she serves on their own multi-disciplined staff team. This team, whatever the size, can effectively manage and operate groups and organizations of any size both for profit and nonprofit.

## WHAT DOES THE ICRI MANAGEMENT COMPANY DO?

Whatever the size, scope, or level of requirements requested over the last 25 years, our ICRI management company has been able to provide a unique convergence of talent, experience, and resources to support and enhance ICRI’s activities and goals.

The ICRI management team operates under the direction of the ICRI Board of Directors. Other key individuals and industry leaders (such as the American Concrete Institute [ACI]) and each of our association management companies have respected ICRI’s independence and autonomy.

The main function of the management team is to work closely with the ICRI Board, committees, and task groups to plan and execute ICRI’s initiatives, conventions, programs, and member services based on the organization’s overall mission statement, long-range strategic plan, and objectives. The Executive Director and staff are responsible for providing strategic and operational leadership, as well as suggesting innovative ideas and new approaches while protecting ICRI’s beliefs and values. ICRI has been very fortunate in having management staff that is also comprised of respected members of the concrete industry.

## 1988—ICRI WAS STARTED WITH OUR FIRST MANAGEMENT COMPANY

ICRI’s first management company was run by Milt and Sally Collins. On May 21, 1988, in Naperville, IL, the inaugural meeting of the International Association of Concrete Repair Specialists (IACRS) was held. This was made possible by people like William Avery of *Concrete Construction* magazine, who showed his personal support of the creation of this type of trade organization. He personally contributed \$1000 to help offset the cost of that organizational meeting.

Milt Collins, our first Executive Director, along with his wife, Sally, took on the awesome task of creating the organization as a legal entity. It was Milt’s initiative at several of Jim Warner’s World of Concrete Seminars in 1988 that got things moving. Milt signed up any attendees that were interested in becoming members of a “concrete repair association.” With the interest that was shown, Milt and Sally began the arduous task of doing all the work to make the organization a reality.

As Jack Morrow, one of ICRI’s Past Presidents, stated at ICRI’s 20th anniversary, “Many of today’s members may not be aware of the financial struggles ICRI had to overcome in the early years. It was the efforts and determination of Milt and Sally Collins that ICRI was able to succeed. This includes such sacrifices as Milt deferring his salary for several months because there were not sufficient funds to pay him.”

From a very modest budget of a few thousand dollars in 1988, our first management company was able to grow and sustain the organization to over \$675,000 in 2001. The hours spent managing a growing membership, creating protocol, overseeing geographic chapters throughout the country, and organizing speakers and conventions could not have not have been accomplished without the stamina, dedication, and belief that Milt and Sally had in our organization.

## ICRI MILESTONES

- October 1988—the first issue of the *Concrete Repair Bulletin* was published;
- October 1989—the first Technical Guideline was published, titled, “Surface Preparation for the Repair of Deteriorated Concrete Resulting from Reinforcing Steel Oxidation”; and
- By the end of 1999, the organization had grown to over 400 members.

During those early years, obstacles and challenges were ever-present. The organization’s original name was changed to the International Concrete Repair Institute (ICRI), and the name took off without a hitch. Membership continued to grow; and conventions were showcasing the “best of the best” in the industry. Sustaining and growing the name recognition of ICRI seemed almost insurmountable at times, especially when other trade associations did not see the need for a separate concrete repair organization. The constant battle to “stay the course” and not succumb to outside pressures, to manage all the details from legalities to answering a caller’s request for a proper repair procedure, might seem overwhelming to most, but Milt and Sally continued to persevere. There was an excitement, there was a purpose, and there was a strong dedication to making this succeed.

What it takes to start an organization and what it takes to keep it going and prospering after 13 years can be two different and distinct lists of activities, challenges, and priorities—each one no more important than the other. As time moved forward, Milt and Sally moved into retirement mode and the reins to the next generation of ICRI management were handed to a very competent and experienced company.

## 2001—CAM TAKES OVER THE OPERATION OF ICRI

CAM (Creative Association Management) took over ICRI as the association management company in June of 2001. Kelly Page, the Executive Director of ICRI and past national ICRI Secretary, reported some of the major achievements since she and her staff took over the management of ICRI.

- Since CAM took over the management of ICRI, revenues have increased from \$675,680 in 2001-

2002 fiscal years to \$1,367,289 in the 2011-2012 fiscal years—over double in 12 years’ time.

- The organization’s balance sheet has grown from approximately \$90,000 in the red to over \$600,000 in the black. We are currently approaching ICRI’s long-term goal of having monies equal to 6 months revenue in reserves.
- Membership, which is critical to sustaining any organization, has grown from 1436 members as of February 2001 to a total of 2044 as of November 2012.
- Supporting members have increased from 14 in 2001 to the current 34.
- *Concrete Repair Bulletin* ad revenues have doubled since 2001.
- Our web presence has increased over the years and the ICRI membership directory has been put online. The website was completely updated and allows for all committee activity work and most recent information to be accessible to members online.
- During the last decade, the Vision 2020 strategic plan for the concrete repair industry was developed and ICRI became a sponsor. CAM facilitated ICRI’s Strategic Plan update, along with ICRI’s long range and operating plans.
- The Technical Activities Committees have grown from seven to 13, with many more subcommittees working on achieving the goals of best practices in the industry.
- The Board of Directors was restructured to allow for greater input from our chapters, with the inclusion of Regional Representatives.
- The financial reporting and accounting system has been improved, with a reliable financial history readily accessible and current.
- The “State of the Institute” document was initiated in 2008 to reflect to the membership a current recap and up-to-date “snapshot” of the organization’s membership numbers, goals, and financial status.
- The annual Project Awards entries have continued to grow from numbering in the low teens to a high of 56 entries.
- The Concrete Moisture Testing and Repair Testing Technician Certification Programs were started in 2008. The Moisture Certification program was able to take off under the direction of CAM, their hired Engineer and Director, Bill Palmer, along with subcommittee Chairs Peter Craig and Scott Tarr. They have grown the program to a reported 350 ± Certified Moisture Testing Technicians. The Repair Testing Technician program under the subcommittee Chairs Tanya Komars and Peter Emmons, along with dedicated students in the CIM program, have created great potential for providing a comprehensive program and revenue for the future.

- In 2012, ICRI's revenues were strong enough to support and hire a full-time Technical Director, thus achieving one of ICRI's long-term goals.

Kelly Page commented, "I think overall, the benchmarks and highlights listed herein clearly show the great strides that ICRI has made in the last 12 years. These accomplishments were made possible as a result of the hard work and combined efforts of our volunteers, our leaders, and CAM all working together. I am very proud to have been a part of these achievements."

## THE ICRI TRAIN MOVES SUCCESSFULLY INTO THE FUTURE

A train cannot move forward without an engine and coal to drive the engine. From our infancy in 1988 to our 25th anniversary, our management companies have provided the steam to drive the ICRI train toward the future.

In the past 25 years, we have survived an erratic economy and grown our organization from a small group of interested attendees to a membership of over 2000. We are a recognized industry leader that is able to proudly offer specifications, guidelines, certifications, and best practices under the umbrella of a quality membership of industry experts and professionals. We have grown financially secure enough that we are able to add a full-time Technical Director and still show a profit. We are able to purchase equipment and outside contractors for our certification programs. We are proud to lend aid, assistance, and encouragement to the students in the CIM program and to offer scholarships to help those deserving students who have shown outstanding abilities. These students are our future and we value the contributions they will make to our industry.

The attributes and achievements which have made us a great organization could not have been achieved without our association management companies' tireless dedication to leading us and guiding us in performing all the day-to-day tasks

from archiving and storing historical information; maintaining and updating our website; organizing and executing events such as our fall and spring conventions, World of Concrete booth, and certification programs; maintaining our industry's strategic alliances with other trade organizations; marketing; advertising; sales of publications; and their unwavering perseverance in continuing to support our principals, bylaws, integrity, and goals.

Overcoming "communication challenges" is a large part of why organizations such as ours were formed; it will be a large part of why we thrive in the future. This is a monumental task for any organization to conquer and maintain, particularly in this cyberspace age of political transparency, accountability, and expectation management. We are all challenged to find a partner who values and demonstrates a commitment to what we are and what we so cherish in the words of our mission statement. That partner who has and will continue to communicate our message to the industry is our association management company.

I am sure the entire membership—past, present, and future—will join me in saying "thank you" to our management companies—both past and present—for without them the ICRI train would have never made it to our first stop, let alone completed the exemplary journey to our celebrated 25th year.

**Milt and Sally Collins, Kelly Page, and Staff—we salute you!**



**Monica M. Rourke** is a Past President of ICRI. She currently serves on several ICRI committees, including Co-Chair of the ICRI Certification committee. Rourke is a representative for the MAPEI Corporation in their Concrete Restoration Systems division. MAPEI is a major restoration materials manufacturer and a Supporting Member of ICRI.