

## History of the William G. Syrotuck Symposium on Search Theory and Practice

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The Syrotuck Symposium began in 1996 to: “Foster the intellectual and scientific development of SAR methods and techniques, to promote new ideas, and to encourage development of new techniques and the practical use of technology.”

The idea of a symposium focused on search for the lost person has its origins with Bill Wade and the National Park Service (NPS). In 1975, Bill brought together the prominent search function researchers to share information and methods. In addition to Bill, participants included Dennis Kelley, Lee Lucas, Bob Mattson, Bill Syrotuck, and Jon Wartes. Out of that meeting, and concurrent work on the new search management course, came the foundation of what we now recognize as the theory and practice of search for the lost person.

By 1995 a significant body of research on the search function had been conducted by many individuals around the world. A number of people including Paul Anderson, NPS and then-NASAR President; Rick LaValla, ERI International and former NASAR president; Don Cooper, author and trainer; Hugh Dougher, NPS; Skip Stoffel, ERI; and others felt it was again time to assemble the leading experts in the field in order to further the study of the search function and to explore new ideas and concepts. The 1996 NASAR conference in Denver was selected as the venue.

At Rick LaValla’s suggestion, the Symposium was named in honor of the late Bill Syrotuck, one of the true pioneers in the field of search for the lost person. The Symposium was open to all who wished to attend. In order to ensure that those known to be active in the study of search theory and practice would be aware of the Symposium and would have the opportunity to make a presentation on their work, some 64 personal invitations were signed by Paul Anderson, NASAR President.

As had been hoped, that first Syrotuck Symposium served as the start of a series of follow on workshops on search theory, practice, and training. Although logistical problems preclude a second Symposium at the 1997 NASAR Conference in Richmond, Virginia, Don Cooper’s Special Interest Group meeting, Modern Perspectives in Search Theory, served as a worthy stand-in. While in Richmond, Carol O’Rourke-Elliott from Canada’s National SAR Secretariat (NSS) offered to sponsor the second Symposium at SARSCENE 97, Canada’s national SAR conference, that fall in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

The third Symposium, co-sponsored by NASAR and ERI, was held at the 1998 NASAR Conference in Portland, Oregon. Due to numerous requests, the NSS sponsored a fourth Symposium that fall at SARSCENE 98 at Banff National Park, Alberta. The fifth Symposium was again sponsored by the NSS at SARSCENE 99 in St. Johns, Newfoundland. The sixth Symposium was scheduled for September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in conjunction with SARSCENE 2001 in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. It was canceled as a result of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The NASAR/MRA conference at Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey in June, 2014 was the site of the revived Symposium.

The most recent Symposium was held October 11-12, 2018 in Reykjavik, Iceland in conjunction with the Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue RESCUE 2018 conference.