The Congress Center in Davos, Switzerland, was the main venue for the AO Foundation’s Board of Trustees Meeting from June 11 to June 14, 2008. As part of the AO’s 50th anniversary celebrations, in addition to currently serving Trustees, all Senior Trustees, Founding and Honorary Members, and AO Alumni Chapter Chairpersons were invited to participate in this very special event.

**Wednesday, June 11: setting the tone**
The traditional welcome cocktail and evening dinner took place at the Hotel Belvédère and set the tone of collegiality that was to permeate over the next few days. While the Trustees Meeting is always an opportunity for old friends to meet up, the presence of so many AO members from down through the decades lent the occasion an extra degree of piquancy.

**Thursday, June 12: electing new Trustees**
The morning began with the annual new Trustees breakfast and the following were elected to join the fold next year: Haluk Agus, Felix Bonnaire, Friedrich Hahn, Dominik Heim, Bernhard Jean-

"We’re meeting people from all over the world; I just attended a talk on surgery in earthquake regions."  
**Herbert Resch, Germany**

"The program is very good and the organization very well done—the Swiss way!"  
**Jacinto Monteiro, Portugal**
In his formal welcome, Chris van der Werken, outgoing President of the AO Foundation, outlined the organization’s commitment to Davos and the history of the AO, which binds the two irrevocably.

A living legend was present in the audience in the form of August Guggenbühl, one of the AO’s 13 founders, who took part in the entire Trustees Meeting. When asked if he ever imagined the AO would spread around the globe when he sat down to form the organization with the twelve other founders in 1958, August Guggenbühl replied, “I still can’t believe it. Everywhere you go in the world, even to the smallest hospital, they know the AO.”

Hansjörg Wyss paid tribute to Martin Allgöwer, another of the AO’s founding fathers, who sadly passed away since last year’s Trustees Meeting in China. The driving force behind the creation of the AO Foundation in 1984 was Martin Allgöwer, said Wyss, who then led all present in a minute’s silence for the man missed by so many.

Charting the organization’s development

In a session entitled “From a local idea to global recognition,” various speakers outlined how the AO has developed from a small working group of mostly Swiss surgeons to one of the world’s largest and most important networks of medical professionals.

After a short coffee break, it was time for the parallel sessions, which repeated over the three days of the scientific program to afford everyone the opportunity to attend each lecture, which covered the topics of imaging, endoscopic surgery, infection, medico-legal aspects of AO practice, and special trauma surgery.

The afternoon’s session changed the focus of the meeting so far by looking ahead to the next five years, more particularly to the challenges and developments faced by the AO Specialties and Institutes.

The evening dinner was held on Schatzalp mountain, requiring the Trustees to board a funicular cable car to dine high above the city of Davos. The view was breathtaking and the restaurant a wonderful location for the Trustees to discuss the points raised during the day’s meeting.

Friday, June 13: appointing a new President

At various hotels around Davos, one-hour-long early-morning sessions were held, allowing the Trustees to select from among a wide range of topics. At nine o’clock sharp, the Trustees’ General Assembly began. The Trustees act as the AO’s parliament and play a critical role in deciding the direction the organization will take. Several reports on the current status of the AO were presented, and elections were held.

“It’s the only opportunity to be all together, as normally we are all separated due to our different specialties.” Dante Marchesi, Switzerland

“For those of us from the Middle East we can discuss the future of the region, which is important to us.” Masoud Norouzi, Iran
Paul Manson was elected President of the AO Foundation and assumed the office from Chris van der Werken. Manson is Professor and Chief of Plastic Surgery at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, US, and is a member of the AO Board of Directors (AOVA). He has already served as the president of the major surgical societies for maxillofacial and plastic surgeons in the United States. Chosen as President-Elect was Norbert Haas, currently the President of the TK-System and a Member of the Academic Council.

Recognizing outstanding achievement
Two more parallel sessions took up the bulk of the day until it was time to bestow awards upon two worthy recipients. The AO Research Fund Prize Award went to Wolfgang Köstler for the project “Clinical applicability of computer-assisted arthroplasty using bio-engineered autografts.” Jörg Auer received the AO Recognition Prize, the highest award the AO can bestow upon one of its members, for his outstanding contributions to and longstanding leadership in the Veterinary TK-System and AO Vet Specialty.

With AO business set aside for another day, Davos Mayor Hans Peter Michel held an evening reception in the magnificent surroundings of the Town Hall’s wood-paneled council chamber to celebrate the symbiotic relationship the AO and Davos have enjoyed for decades.

A brass band parade from the Town Hall began the evening’s outdoor festivities, drawing in the populace of Davos. One of the alpine resort’s main roads was blocked off from traffic and refreshment stands replaced parked cars for the night.

The importance of the AO to the local community was noted by one resident who commented that: “The AO has helped make Davos famous all around the world. It is great that the party is open to everyone, it really gives you a new perspective on the AO.”

Saturday, June 14: continuing a tradition of openness
Once again, the day began with very informative early morning breakfast sessions, including two parallel sessions in the Congress Center. A special treat was guest lecturer Stephan Perren’s very engaging talk on his flight around the world to stimulate awareness and support for research on the scientific and clinical aspects of osteoporosis.

There was more levity in the afternoon session as the topic “Did the AO improve patient care?” was tackled. Contributors from CMF, Veterinary, Spine, and Trauma analyzed the results of decades of engagement by the AO in these areas. The overall summation was largely positive, with speakers not afraid to share what went less well in a spirit of openness they inherited from the founders of the AO who always emphasized detailing both good and bad experiences.

The final summation officially drew the scientific proceedings to a close and recognized some of those who have contributed so much to the AO.

“I’m getting to know so many famous people within the AO and I’ve had a chance to speak with them—it’s great!”  Martin Richardson, Australia

“…a fascinating meeting where we had abundant fellowship, understanding, and also the latest trends in trauma management.”  Shantharam Shetty, India
There is a maximum limit of five years for someone to serve as a Trustee. This ensures a constant flow of new blood and ideas into the AO Foundation. Chris van der Werken thanked the following for all they had achieved and for their service over the past few years: Ernesto Bersusky, Joseph Borelli, Yu-Ray Chen, Sergio Fernandez, Dante Marchesi, Michael Stürmer, Clifford Turen, Mark Vrahas, Klaus Wenda, and Rico Vannini.

Three Trustees were awarded honorary membership of the AO Foundation. Thomas Rüedi, a founding member of the AO Foundation in 1984 and a pupil of Martin Allgöwer was the first to be recognized. Hansjörg Wyss, who has had an AO connection since 1975, was the second recipient of this award. Jim Kellam, Past-President of the AO Foundation and editor-in-chief of AO Dialogue magazine was similarly honored.

Welcoming the new AO President
Chris van der Werken, in his last official act as President of the AO Foundation, outlined the role the president plays and sketched some of the highlights from his two-year term. He delivered a humorous presentation to prepare the new President of the AO Foundation, Paul Manson, for the challenges he will face. Paul Manson responded with a similarly tongue-in-cheek presentation in which he thanked Chris van der Werken for all he had done as President.

Manson drew attention to the fact that as a craniomaxillofacial surgeon he is the first ‘minority’ president. While aware of the challenges ahead of him in his new role, he addressed the Trustees saying, “I rely on you…and because of your excellence I don’t think I can fail.”

The scientific and administrative part of the meeting over, it was time for what was probably the social highlight of the AO’s jubilee year—the gala dinner for Trustees, Senior Trustees, AO employees, and invited guests: in all, some 750 people.

The ice hockey stadium in Davos, the only venue in town large enough to accommodate so many people, was transformed into a lavish dining hall. Huge black drapes, a multimedia show, and top-notch entertainment meant that the scoreboard hanging down from the roof was the only reminder of the venue’s true purpose. Everyone present took home a commemorative, specially commissioned book entitled “Transforming Surgery—Changing Lives”, a mixture of facts and anecdotes that really brings the AO’s history to life.

For one night only, almost every member of the AO Family was gathered in one place. Everywhere you looked you could see people who have given so much to the AO and who have gained so much from it, too. Despite the cold weather in Davos, the warmth the AO Family generated that night was more than sufficient to fill the cavernous venue. It was an evening the likes of which we will never see again and a fitting peak of the AO’s 50th anniversary year celebrations.

The next Trustees Meeting will be held in Chicago, US, in 2009.

"...it’s like a family reunion. The Senior Trustees can see what the next generation has done and that the future is very promising. We are unique. We are one. And thanks to the AO Spirit, we will continue." Suthorn Bavonratanavech, Thailand
To mark the AO’s 50th anniversary, Esther and Robert Mathys Junior commissioned a sculpture by Dublin-based American artist Paul Gregg for the AO Center in Davos. The piece, entitled “One revolution per day”, had its unveiling in June in the presence of Mr and Mrs Mathys, Paul Gregg, AO President Chris van der Werken, AO Founding Member August Guggenbühl, AO representatives and honorary guests.

The steel and birch sculpture encompasses two connecting and harmonious parts, both referencing the international scope of the AO. On one side a large pendulum swings across a polar-view map of the world in synchronicity with a slowly-revolving, 18-inch crystal globe on the other side. The town of Davos marks the reference point on the sphere, upon which visiting scientists can chart the time in their homelands in relation to the AO’s home.

Stainless steel fastenings on the sculpture are clearly evident and call to mind AO faculty’s dexterity with instrumentation, while the inscription “life is movement” attests to the fact that “movement is a healthy part of the world and also of joints. It ties in with the AO philosophy that external fixation promotes quick recovery and early movement,” says artist Paul Gregg.

“Great care was taken to ensure the sculpture reflects the meticulous craftsmanship and precise engineering that appeals to me as an artist, and is vitally important to the AO in the advancement of orthopedic surgery,” he adds.

The artist’s sculptures for the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, Ireland, of bombed-out buildings repaired using external fixators as architectural scaffolding brought him to the attention of AO Past President Peter Matter, who later recommended Gregg’s work to Robert Mathys Junior.

Mathys had confidence in Gregg’s vision of an extraordinary artwork to honor the AO’s first half-century; it’s noteworthy that the material used nods to the exceptional craftsmanship and skill with stainless steel shown by his father, the late Robert Mathys Senior, pioneering designer of AO instruments and implants.

“I deliberately worked with stainless steel to reference orthopedic fixation,” Gregg explains. “I included wood as this has a fibrous make-up similar to bone. It also offers “warmth” to the overall piece so as to balance the “clinical” reference stainless steel brings. By fixing these materials together with clearly visible bolts my fabrication displays the kinship of techniques between an orthopedic surgeon and a carpenter.”

The theme of kinship also resonates with Robert Mathys Jr, who at the sculpture’s unveiling said the artwork’s two main components: “are locked to each other so that one part can not work without the other part. For me it is a symbol of partnership and steady development and of an idea spread across the globe. I am very proud to still be a member of this great AO Family.”

(www.paulgreggstudio.com)
A thoroughly engaging and informative book specially commissioned to celebrate the AO’s 50th anniversary, entitled “Transforming Surgery, Changing Lives: The First 50 Years of the AO”, has proved very popular since its launch at the Anniversary Gala Party in Davos in June.

This hundred-page, hardcover book provides a comprehensive introduction to all aspects of the AO, from its earliest days and the unique contributions of the 13 founding fathers, through its development from a Swiss to a global organization, to its current structure, activities and objectives, together with pertinent discussions on its future.

The AO’s ubiquitous sense of family and fellowship, its unique spirit, and the abiding principles and values put in place by its founders resonate on its pages.

The result of 16 months of creative effort, the book is a valuable reference and memorable keepsake, appropriate for AO ‘old-timers’ and newcomers alike—and for an external audience, a first-time insight into a groundbreaking organization whose excellent work and dedication benefit patients the world over.

“As I began this project, I was struck by how few people outside specialized surgical fields knew the compelling story of the AO. At the same time, the concept called for subject matter for AO insiders as part of the 50th anniversary celebration. It was a tough balancing act.

“I was fortunate to have the guidance and support of an excellent project manager and editorial team led by Jim Kellam, as well as graphic artists who immediately grasped the layout concept and infused it with their creative talent,” Bird says.

Graphic designer Sandro Isler came up with a dynamic design that marries text, original interviews, and humorous anecdotes with photographs both old and new, whimsical sketches, and colorful illustrations so that the result is authoritative yet warm and welcoming.

It’s a book that rewards each reader in a uniquely personal way. For AO Foundation Anniversary Manager Amirah Blackmore that meant learning what the AO spirit means to surgeons around the world. “As long as the friendship and sharing prevail, the AO’s future will be assured and thereby benefit us all,” she says.

The book was distributed to Trustees during the Trustees Meeting in June, and will be given to AO employees, faculty active around the world in 2008, AO Alumni members at regional courses in Dubai, UAE, and Chiang Mai, Thailand, to the AO’s industrial partners, and on special request from health authorities.

A book teaser will appear on the AO website at www.aofoundation.org in September, where the book will be available to order at a cost of CHF 50.– plus packaging and postage.