

Editor's Report - Fall 2025 IAC BOD meeting

By Taylor L. Mershon, IAC editor, IAC 442603

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2025 General Overview

New Editor Training

During the last 3 weeks of January this year, Lorrie Penner trained me (Taylor Mershon) to fill her position as the IAC's editor, in preparation for her retirement on January 31, 2025. By the time I came onboard, the January/February issue had already gone through the publishing process, and for my training we went through edits together for the majority of the content for the March/April issue, which was technically my first publication as editor for the IAC. Lorrie had also left me with a few articles prepared for the May/June issue, and she made sure that I was familiar with the file structure and the organization system she'd been using in the internationalaerobaticclub@gmail.com google drive, which is where we keep all of the content for the magazine, *In the Loop*, social media, and IAC website.

Social Media Manager - Jackson Halsmer

Jackson Halsmer was hired shortly before me to handle the IAC's social media and a few other projects/tasks pertaining to our digital publications. For the first few months of 2025, Jackson also prepared our *In the Loop* materials for EAA publications team (Emme Hornug and Sam Sasin) and uploaded those materials each month to a Dropbox account from which the EAA pubs team retrieves the material to build the e-newsletter. This system is in place because neither Jackson or I have access to the EAA's internal content database.

Around June, Jackson showed me how to do the *ITL* content layout document and the uploads to Dropbox. Since I was the one building 90% of the publication each month, we agreed it made more sense for me to take on all of the steps of the process. Shortly after this, we also decided to stop posting to the *Sport Aerobatics* social media pages (Instagram and Facebook) and focus our efforts on the IAC HQ social media pages, as we had noticed that we were posting redundant content to both accounts prior to that. We made social media announcements to the membership regarding this change prior to initiating it.

Jackson and I have maintained a great working relationship with good communication over text, email, and regular phone or video calls (for meetings). When making decisions pertaining to social media management, I have relied on Jackson's expertise in that field for guidance (one example is the decision to stop posting redundant content on the IAC and *Sport Aerobatics* social media pages). We have an efficient system for team coordination of the publication of news and other content for social media, and Jackson often helps out with posting news items or other articles on the website, too.

Most recently, Jackson took the lead on the project to replace the old videos on the IAC main page website header with new videos, and he's been coordinating with Lorrie and her son

Jarrett, Brennan York, DJ Molny, Tien Luu, and some other IAC members to gather and prepare the content needed to complete that task.

Sport Aerobatics Archive Project

Since February I have been digitizing the old *Sport Aerobatics* issues from my personal magazine collection, editing them as needed in Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator, and putting them up on the IAC website arranged by year. My personal *Sport Aerobatics* magazine collection is extensive but not complete, so Lorrie has lent me some of her own older magazines to scan and upload.

I started this project after noticing that:

1) the magazines on the website didn't go back further than 2015, and
2) I have consistently referenced or incorporated material from the older magazines in my work as editor, and I wanted to start sharing more of this material, which would be easier with a complete digital collection.

That's why I started the *Sport Aerobatics* Archive Project and began publishing the monthly "Throwback Issue" in *ITL*, with the *month* of the throwback issue matching the same month that the e-newsletter is published.

Someone at EAA helped me out by uploading the magazines from 2005-2015, since they had these issues already in a digital format. I am not uploading the pre-2005 SA issues in any particular order, but I do keep a spreadsheet that helps me keep track of everything. I plan to continue this project until all of the IAC's pre-2025 issues are digitized and available on the IAC website.

IAC Website/News

There have been some extended "dry" periods in the frequency of the news posts on the IAC website, which is something I'm resolving by increasing the frequency at which news items are posted. Currently the goal is to post a new news item at least once a week.

Additionally, Jim Bourke, Brennan York, and I collaborated to rearrange the way the news is presented on the website by removing the widget that used to live on the right side of all the pages on the site above the "upcoming events" widget, and instead presenting the news only on the main/home page.

AirVenture 2025

I attended AirVenture 2025 with my family from Saturday, July 18, 2025 (before the event began) until Sunday, July 27, 2025, staying in EAA chapter camping with some IAC friends. I was at the IAC building every day of the event for several hours meeting people from IAC and authors I'd worked with or planned to work with, and seeking out stories, aircraft, and pilots to feature in upcoming publications. I also conducted interviews with Extra Aircraft and AURA AERO for their sponsor spotlight articles in the Nov/Dec issue of *Sport Aerobatics*.

Next year my goal is to arrange some EAA photoshoots during AirVenture and to obtain more videos and media from in and around the IAC building, speaking with IACers, and checking out the airplanes parked in front of the building and on the flightline.

U.S. National Aerobatic Championships 2025

I attended the U.S. Nationals for the entire week of the event—this was my first year attending Nationals. Since Lorrie Penner and her son Jarrett Engeseth handled the photos for the event and coordinated with Jackson (who worked remotely) to get the content up on social media, I was able to focus on:

- 1) meeting many pilots in person and gathering content for the magazine, and
- 2) meeting and guiding a couple of media personnel through their coverage of the event.

I did this by introducing the media people to the pilots and hand-selecting some pilots in particular to be interviewed, based on their personalities and their stories.

Next year I'd like to do a lot more advertising for the event beforehand, on social media and through content in *ITL* and the magazine. I'd like to get some pilot interviews and highlight people trying out for the US team, beginning a couple of months before the event.

Photos/photoshoot requests from EAA

Since we had such a limited amount of time for Lorrie to complete my initial training, going over the process/procedure for requesting photos from EAA was not something we ended up covering. There was confusion on my end regarding how to request that EAA do a photoshoot for us, and as a result the air-to-air photos I mistakenly *informally* requested from EAA at AirVenture were not taken. I have now been trained by Jim Busha on how to request photos from EAA properly, and I will ensure that we get photos at AirVenture 2026. Additionally, if the opportunity arises, I will arrange other photoshoots for magazine content as needed in 2026.

In the Loop

Based on poor rates of member clicks and viewing of material in the IAC's *In the Loop* e-newsletter, I decided I wanted to stop putting effort and time into this publication as an e-newsletter and got approval during AirVenture 2025 from Jim Bourke to initiate the process of ending the publication in its format as an e-newsletter. August 2025 was the first month that we skipped the e-newsletter, then I published *ITL* again in September because there were some paid ads that had been purchased already, then skipped October. See below for future plans for *ITL*.

Please see the table below for an example of *In the Loop*'s poor performance with our subscribers.

In the Loop Email Performance: Sep 21, 2025 - Oct 20, 2025

# emails Sent	% Delivered	% Opened	Clicked Email	Clicked to Opened Ratio
20,779	98.50%	29.70%	606	10.00%

Travel Budget

The editor's travel budget currently is based on cost estimates of travel expenses for the last few editors who have all resided close to Oshkosh. However, I work remotely from Santa Paula, CA, and my travel expenses for attending events like AirVenture and Nationals are higher because I have to travel further based on where I live. I also make a strong effort to attend all the West Coast IAC aerobatic competitions that are within a reasonable driving distance from me so that I can gather content for IAC's publications, including interviews, contest highlights reports, stories, and photos. I propose we increase the IAC Editor travel budget to **\$5000** in order to compensate for the additional travel expenses incurred by my distance from IAC headquarters and my frequent travel to IAC contests.

Future Plans for IAC Publications—2026 and beyond

In the Loop, Reinvented

My goal going forward with *ITL* is to turn it into a podcast or series of videos on our youtube channel. I want to still publish *ITL* monthly, and I anticipate having a goal of one podcast or video per month at a minimum. I've been looking for someone to host the podcast/videos and have a few candidates in mind, but if I'm unable to find someone I am willing to host it myself. Ideally, topics will include pilot interviews, tour/info video of different types of aerobatic airplanes, contest/camp/event highlights/footage, and potentially some historic segments. I am planning to broadcast the new *ITL* over social media and the IAC website beginning early in 2026.

Sport Aerobatics in 2026: Increase in Total Page Count Per Year¹

Proposal:

The feedback I've gotten from my work as editor for *Sport Aerobatics* has been overwhelmingly positive. I've been commended for including a wider variety of topics in the magazine, and with each issue since May/June 2025, I've consistently encountered the problem of running out of room in the current 48-page magazine for the planned content I have gathered for each issue. I also have found myself wanting to put more of the content that may have been in *ITL* into the magazine, since I have the numbers to show that *ITL* is not being opened or even read by our members in any significant quantity.

Additionally, through my study of IAC's 1980-2015 magazines, I think that *Sport Aerobatics* would be more successful if there was more space in each issue dedicated to paid ads. **By increasing the overall page count of the *Sport Aerobatics* publication for the year,**

¹ Throughout this proposal, for the purpose of simplicity, *all page counts are listed without the “+4” that is usually attached to the total page count of a magazine issue* to account for the four cover pages that will always be included in the publication. By excluding the “+4”, we can more easily focus on the base costs and other quantitative data pertaining to the magazine's total page count under the assumption that *there will always be +4 pages of covers in each issue*.

I believe our members would benefit from 1) getting more high-quality content overall throughout the year than I am able to fit into our current 48 pages per issue page count, and 2) more ad space for aviation businesses and other sponsors (some decades of our prior magazines had often at least six pages of ads in the flymart section alone, meaning more brands were getting more visibility with our members, and we had much more revenue from paid ads than we do now).

Printing Costs:

I propose that in order to meet the goals of delivering more high-quality aerobatic content to our members and of being able to run more paid ads to increase income for the magazine/IAC, we should implement the following publishing schedule (based on data provided by Hal Bryan, Managing Editor for EAA):

PAGE COUNT	COST PER ISSUE	NUMBER OF ISSUES	COST x # OF ISSUES
64+4 PAGES	\$8,319.44	6	\$49,916.64

This would allow for a roughly 26% increase in the total page count for the entire year—going from the 304 total pages we have currently (48x5+64) to the 384 pages proposed in this report (64x6).

Based on EAA-provided data and cost estimates from me, EAA's Hal Bryan, and Jordan Ashley, the overall total printing costs of the proposed 64 pages x 6 issues / year should be about the same as our current printing costs (for 2025, IAC has 50K allotted for printing costs, which is almost equal to the cost of the proposed 64 pages x 6 issues / year, which is \$49,916.64).

Mailing Costs

Since, in this proposal, the frequency of the magazine would remain at 6 issues/year, and the overall page count would only be increasing by 26%, **it is estimated** (by me and Jordan Ashley, according to data gathered from the current costs for postage of *Sport Aerobatics*) **that our mailing costs for the magazine will be about the same as they are currently, with the maximum possible increase in cost being equal to or less than 26%** (which would only occur IF the magazine shipping costs are calculated by weight rather than frequency, and assuming that the rate of cost per unit of weight is consistent for the possible weight increase that may result from adding 26% more pages overall per year to the magazine).

Timing of change

I propose that we implement this change *after* the Jan/Feb 2026 issue of SA because, according to information provided to me by Hal Bryan, head of EAA publications, we will need to give the printers a certain amount of notice before we could reasonably expect the changes to take effect. If implementing the changes in the March/April 2026 issue of SA is not possible, I recommend we ask for the earliest date possible *after* the March/April issue from the printer for

the change to occur, and implement the change corresponding to the issue that would be in the publication process at that point in time.

Content proof for longer magazines

If desired by the board, I am prepared to present at the Fall IAC board of director's meeting in November an overview of the content layout plans I have for 2026. I have examples of content and already have several new columns lined up for 2026. In this content layout plan for the year I will show that at a baseline level I will always have more than enough content to fill our current page count plus the additional pages I am proposing we add to the magazine's total page count for the year.

Advertising: 2026 and beyond

There is the problem of *finding sponsors/ads*, which I've identified as resulting from the fact that there is currently no one in IAC *seeking out* sponsorship funds for the magazine. Sue Anderson, the advertising manager at EAA, works for EAA, not IAC, so there's no reason for us to expect she'd do more than the processing/setup of new sponsors/vendors pertaining to running ads in our magazine. However, there are so many potential sponsors that would be very likely to pay for ads in our magazine if they knew that 1) their ads *will* be seen by our membership in magazines packed with a great variety of awesome content, and 2) that the costs for running ads are very reasonable and the exposure these brands would get is certainly worth the cost of those ads.

I would like to reflect Lorrie Penner's recommendation to the board in her editor's report in 2023 (link to report- click [HERE](#).):

I would like to recommend the IAC board look into finding a marketing specialist to help us reinvigorate our approach to advertising and marketing. Or appoint someone to the board who is in the marketing world and willing to donate their time and expertise. While the EAA marketing personnel are very willing to fulfill specific requests, like printing up our membership brochures, they are not proactive when asked how to help us develop approaches to gaining new advertisers or how to "market" ourselves to potential new advertisers. Therefore, I don't recommend looking to them.

CALL FOR ADVERTISING LEADS. If you have a lead for a potential company who might be interested in placing their advertisements in Sport Aerobatics, please let [me] know.—Lorrie Penner, IAC Editor - 2023

I believe there are lots of opportunities for small aviation businesses and specialized products on the market to advertise in our magazine—we just need to make it happen. And, in order to make it happen, we need to have someone *appointed* to that role or we need to form a committee in IAC that is solely for the purpose of securing advertising/marketing for IAC's publications. I propose that the board consider **acquiring a specialist in marketing whether it is through hiring a part time independent contractor or through forming a committee** to handle this very important and significant aspect of our magazine/untapped source of generating revenue.

Closing Thoughts

It has been my absolute pleasure to succeed Lorrie in the IAC Editor position, and I genuinely wake up every day *excited* to do my work. There has been a bit of a learning curve with certain things like the process for requesting photos from EAA and the task of posting consistent, frequent news items on the website, but in this first year I have learned a ton and acquired so many more aerobatic friends than I ever could have anticipated. I love to hunt for stories and put together a wide variety of content for the magazine, and it's my goal that each issue of *Sport Aerobatics* is better than the previous. I am overwhelmingly happy in my job and I am honored to be the person representing IAC as the editor.

I thank you for your time and attention to my report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor L. Mershon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Taylor" on the first line and "L. Mershon" on the second line.

Taylor L. Mershon, IAC Editor