

Committee on Membership Annual Report -- 1999

The members of the APS Committee on Membership for 1999 were: Peter Reynolds (Chair), James Crichton, Judy Franz (Executive Officer APS), Daniel Grischkowsky, James Maher, Bernie Meyerson, Frank Narducci, Thomas O'Neill, Matthew Richter, Erich Vogt and Dirk Walecka. APS and AIP Representatives to the Committee were: Barrie Ripin (APS Liaison), Trish Lettieri and Frances Atkinson (APS Membership Dept.), Ed Goldin and Roman Czjuko (AIP Liaisons).

The charge to this Committee is to suggest to Council means for improving the relationship between the Society and its members, services the Society provides to its members, and other activities in the area of membership as delegated to it by the Council. As of 1996, when the Committee on Membership Publications was terminated, this Committee has also assumed the responsibility for oversight of Membership Publications.

The activities of the CoMem can be roughly grouped under two main headings:

A. Activities which are mostly informational or information-gathering in character.

The CoMem is briefed by other APS committees and departments and by AIP on membership-related issues. Membership surveys are carried out directly by the APS under Staff supervision, and pertinent information is extracted from surveys or reports prepared by other organizations (AIP, AAPT, ACS, IEEE, etc.) which may be of interest to or have impact on the APS and its members. This information is studied by the Committee and used to make informed recommendations to Staff and the Council.

B. Activities which directly impact or benefit members or operations. Included are recommendations on membership benefits, dues and invoicing, member recruitment campaigns, communications with and to members regarding member benefits and member responsibilities, APS national activities, staff advisory activities, membership publications, and oversight of membership-related pages on the APS web site.

The following summarizes the main activities of the Committee on Membership (CoMem) for 1999.

Activities for 1999

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

The Committee was briefed on numerous membership-related items. Any actions taken based on these briefings will be presented below.

APS Membership Department reported on membership statistics.

A Lapsed Member survey was reported; most renewal barriers cited have already been

addressed by the Society.

Committee was provided with updates on APS Education and Outreach Department activities.

Committee on Careers and Professional Development reported on a number of new programs.

APS News continues to improve as a communications medium with the Membership. Barrie Ripin is to be congratulated for transforming the newsletter into an interesting to read and colorful benefit to members.

APS' Task Force on the Structure & Responsibility of Council is looking into a possible restructuring of Council. One suggestion made by the Task Force is a limit of one Council member per Unit. The CoMem also endorsed the suggestion of increased International representation by including one international member for a two year term.

Journal prices will have to rise for FY01. Membership prices, despite a ~10% projected increase, will remain at marginal (last copy) cost. CoMem stressed the need to communicate the pricing scheme (and the fact of last copy cost) to members.

The Centennial Store at the Atlanta meeting was a popular success.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A new benefit for members has been established. GEICO auto insurance has been offered since December 1998, initially under a trial agreement. Membership response has been very favorable. Many members are saving more on their auto insurance than the cost of their APS membership dues. APS moreover receives a relatively small but useful commission from GEICO, which has been employed towards new membership recruitment and retention.

As of January 1999 a New Member Newsletter has replaced the new member kit, as recommended by this Committee last year. The discontinued kit was time consuming to compile and expensive to mail, and at the same time too large and overwhelming for most new members to fully review. The new format is less overwhelming, and focuses on Member benefits and Society programs.

The new 2000-01 APS Membership Directory will be made available on CD ROM as well as in paper and Web-based forms.

Subscription to US Opportunities Alert (USOA) was explored by the Committee as a potential membership benefit. This would provide alerts on possible sources of research funding. Trial use did not resolve whether it would be a worthwhile membership benefit. However, a link to the free Fedix service was recommended.

An APS Marketplace will be established (on the Web) that will provide membership with discounts on textbooks and other products. APS will receive some income as well.

BATNET has been chosen as the provider.

Multi-year payment of dues was investigated and rejected as serving too few.

MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

The CoMem explored with Staff the possibility of a Congressional Fellowship program for Seniors. This would enable seniors to make use of their expertise and experience in the halls of Congress. It was determined that the existing Congressional Fellowship program was open to Senior members. Nevertheless, the CoMem asked the Mid-Atlantic Seniors Group (MASG) to explore other less-demanding options and make a proposal if warranted. After some investigation by the MASG, it was determined that there is not enough interest by volunteers to require an additional fellowship program.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

APS yearly membership dues, which have not increased since FY96, increased by \$5 in FY2000, as recommended by the 1998 CoMem to Council.

For FY1999, in honor of the Society's Centennial, Life membership has been offered at a \$100 discount. Preliminary results of 159 new life members/fellows show that the offer was a success. Recent statistics show an average of only 50 new life members/fellows per year prior to this.

Senior Life Membership was recommended as a new membership category. This will benefit both the members and APS. The rate proposed will be 15 times the annual senior membership.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS WITH MEMBERSHIP

Membership feedback is to be more aggressively pursued.

Staff will investigate the possibility of sending congratulatory letters to new PhDs along with Society information.

New Member lunches have been implemented by Staff (using GEICO funds).

One graduate student focus group has been held (Univ of MD) and others are planned. These provide insight to APS on issues that interest/attract graduate students to APS and reasons for their potential lack of interest. Items identified so far: money is a major concern to graduate students (hence interest in GEICO, textbook discounts, etc); they are primarily concerned with career issues; they perceive leaving academia as "leaving physics".

Stephen Carey, President of AMMR, a firm specializing in association marketing and management research, gave a presentation to the Committee on how he could possibly assist the Society with membership retention and recruitment. The Committee and Staff

were not convinced that he could provide any significant new ideas that APS is not already pursuing. Moreover, the retention figures that Carey cited as the average individual society rate is lower than the existing APS membership monthly retention rate of 92 - 94%

MEMBERSHIP SIZE AND CONSTITUTION

Membership as a whole is growing nicely.

Membership in units is shrinking slightly. The Committee is not concerned with this trend. Potential causes for the decrease in unit members may be resulting from the proliferation of units, the large number of new student members who have not chosen their path, and could even be interpreted as a sign of the unity of physics, that so many members see no need to associate themselves with any unit at all.

Students, and particularly Undergraduate students, are being more aggressively recruited. This shows in the Membership numbers. Retention will be an important issue to address with this group.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

International joint membership (initially with Switzerland) is being explored. This provides a discounted membership price for membership in both societies.

APS WEB SITE

The APS pages are still substantially improving (despite starting out already in very good shape). It is believed by the Committee to be the most important and visible way the Society communicates information to members and the outside community. The CoMem continues to recommend Society resources be committed to improving and updating the home page. Members value on-line access and most frequently access (1) BAPS meeting information, (2) APS News, (3) What's New, and (4) careers/employment information. An Amazon.com link has been added to the Membership web page to allow members to purchase books online directly from the APS site. More discount textbook and other purchases are to be implemented through BATNET and others (see earlier in this report).

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE ON MEMBERSHIP

The role of Vice Chair has been clarified and augmented. The Vice Chair's role is to:

Substitute for the Chair in his/her absence.

Bring items to the Agenda. The Vice Chair is tasked to brainstorm on membership issues, and to bring these to the Table at each CoMem meeting.

The Vice Chair is not an automatic successor to the Chairmanship. The Chair is at present

appointed by the President of the Society.

The role of the Committee has evolved during this year to provide brainstorming and to act as a sounding board for Staff ideas. This role is somewhat less formal, and it is hoped to be more useful to the Society.