

USMS CONVENTION – San Diego, CA – 2003

Committee Name: Communications

Session # (if more than one meeting): _____

Comte. report #: 17

Minutes recorded by: Meg Smath

Date/time of this meeting: 9/11/03 4:30 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

ACTION ITEMS

1. **MSA to request that the Recognition and Awards Committee consider restructuring the Newsletter of the Year Award into a Communications Award.**

Committee Chair: Hugh Moore Vice Chair(s): Michael Moore

Number of committee members present: 13 Absent: 10 Number of other delegates at this meeting: 19

Committee members present (list all): Hugh Moore, Meg Smath, Carl Saxton, Tom Lyndon, Jim Matysek, Bill Volckening, Kenn Lowy, Tracy Grilli, Kathy Casey, Dennis McManus, George Cunningham, Sarah Hromada, Michael Moore, Lynn Hazlewood.

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m.

1. LMSC handbook: This year the LMSC handbook included a section on tips for preparing newsletters. A subcommittee consisting of Kenn, Tracy, Tom, and Bill will review this section and add to it.
2. Effective Web Content Subcommittee: Hugh recognized the work performed by a sub-committee chaired by Mark Hurly. The recommendations will appear in the LMSC handbook.
3. Website Navigation Subcommittee: Michael Moore reported that the subcommittee is deciding what changes they will recommend to improve the Website. They expect to change the look and feel of the site, since it is 7 or 8 years old now. They also plan to work on navigation and make it easier to use.
4. Review of committee description: The current description is very broad-based, which allows flexibility, but it also has no focus or mandate. It is a good exercise for all committees to periodically review their description, and this is especially true for Communications, since technology is evolving so rapidly. Tom suggested we judge how accurate the description is by testing it against what we've been doing. Hugh said we have been providing direction for the website, primarily in a monthly conference call with Lynn Hazlewood, Jim Matysek, and himself; very little guidance has been provided for the SWIM editor, except for the poll conducted on the content in the articles in one issue. Very little guidance has been provided for LMSCs.
5. Welcoming new swimmers: The Communications Committee discussion forum has been debating what could be provided at the LMSC and national level, but some participants felt that clubs should be the primary level for welcoming new swimmers. One suggestion was to include suggestions on ways to welcome new swimmers in the LMSC handbook. A subcommittee consisting of Sarah, Mark Hurley, and Meg was formed to come up with ways to educate new swimmers on the structure of USMS. It will aim for publishing in the 2005 handbook.
6. How can this committee help the Webmaster, SWIM magazine editor, National Office, and LMSCs improve communications: Kathy said that she avoids the discussion forums because of the uncivil tone of some of the posts, and asked if there are guidelines on manners. Jim said that yes, when participants sign up for the forums they agree to guidelines; but these guidelines are only accessible when signing up. Jim said he could have a reminder about the guidelines pop up every time someone logs on to the forums. Should repeat offenders be banned? Generally, Jim tries to avoid the appearance of censorship. Most bans have been for unsolicited advertising or vulgarity. Occasionally, someone has been banned temporarily for "netiquette" violations. Jim monitors all forums except LMSC and private forums. Generally, Jim tries to let things go for as long as possible, because often the forums are self-correcting. Jim only has to delete threads because of rudeness about four times a year. Other public forums have a much less civil tone than ours.

Jim reminded everyone that there is a link on every post where readers who are offended can report the post to him. If he receives enough complaints, he will take action. The new forum software with the ability to identify posters has greatly improved the tone of the forums.

Jim asked that anyone with design skills please contact Michael, the chair of the subcommittee on improving web design.. Michael was asked what we are looking for in the new design, and replied something that looks good, and reflects well on USMS. Also, the navigation should be intuitive; three or four clicks should get you where you want to go. Jim is aware that there are problems with the search function on our site and is working to fix it. Please let Jim know of other similar problems, which might help him narrow the problem down. Currently there are no plans to change content on the website. Tom said he felt the content for "the masses" was weak. When asked what he thought they wanted to know, Tom suggested stroke tips, articles by Emmett Hines, etc. Tom asked who is supposed to develop content, and was told other USMS committees.

A suggestion was made to let Bill Volckening know about good local meets, and propose ideas for articles. Another suggestion was made to post old SWIM articles on our website. Posting these articles will require approval from SWIM.

Hugh praised Tracy, who does a tremendous amount of communicating for USMS. She effectively uses technology. Tracy commented that thanks to email and the Web, she has seen a tremendous reduction in phone calls and mail requests. Most of our publications are available online, and she can respond almost instantly.

Our subcommittees on effective Web communication and newsletters are working on LMSC communication. Michael mentioned that at the LMSC chairs meeting, a request was made for a mail list manager. Jim will work on this, and Michael will send an FAQ to the LMSC chairs describing how to manage a mail list. The discussion turned to instituting a national email list, but many committee members have strong objections, mainly because of privacy issues. We have to be careful not to be perceived as spamming.

7. Communications award proposal: Bill Volckening submitted the following proposal: "The USMS Communications Committee proposes to restructure the Newsletter of the Year Award. The restructured award will be a broad-based Communications Award. This Communications Award may recognize any or all of the following: (1) Newsletters, (2) Web sites, (3) Outstanding contribution to communications within USMS, (4) Outstanding long-term contribution to communications within USMS. The process of this award will be: (1) Notify members of USMS about the award and deadline for submitting nominations, (2) Nominations will be received by a predetermined date, (3) A subcommittee will review the nominations and vote. The Communications Committee suggests this subcommittee be comprised of members of the Communications Committee and the Recognition and Awards Committee. (4) The recipient would be announced at the annual convention." **MSA to request that the Recognition and Awards Committee consider replacing the Newsletter of the Year Award with a Communications Award.**

The meeting was adjourned at: 6:29 p.m.

TASKS FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

1. A subcommittee will review the section in the LMSC handbook about preparing effective newsletters, and add to it.
2. A subcommittee will make recommendations on improving the look and feel, and navigation of the website.
3. A subcommittee will develop a section in the LMSC handbook for educating new swimmers about the structure of USMS.