

Committee on Membership

Annual Report -- 2001

The 2001 Committee on Membership was made up by William Herrmannsfeldt, Chair, Ronald Armale, Lee Bernstein, Philip Bucksbaum, William Cummings, Judy Franz, D.R. Hamann, Kathleen McCloud, Bernie Meyerson, and Susan Niebur, Student Representative.

The Committee met on May 14 and November 7 in 2001. The November meeting was conducted by tele-conference. Issues on which we debated in some detail in these two meetings included:

- 1) The following are current programs and offers to attract new members and retain current members.
 - A) The "Friends of APS" is a program used to identify a senior faculty member in the research universities who can inform other faculty members and students about APS programs and invite them to join the Society.
 - B) A related approach in National Laboratories to encourage management to urge scientists traveling to APS meetings to join the Society is being explored by the Committee Chair.
 - C) A new APS Forum of graduate students was approved by Council April 2001.
 - D) Attention to the problems of retaining retired scientists. Better publicity for the half-price dues rate for seniors and retired.
 - E) A Half-price membership promotion requested by the APS Executive Board is running October 1, 2001 through February 28, 2002.

Because all these efforts are not very well established yet, the effectiveness must be continually reviewed by the Committee and the level of success measured.

2) The 2001 APS Domestic Member Survey was completed in the first quarter of the year. The entire 2001 Survey was executed electronically to 6,776 members. Three different forms varying in length were used to achieve a strong response rate of 45%. Overall, the results were very positive and just as good as the survey five years ago, if not even better. Survey results generally showed that members are satisfied with the performance of the APS, and feel that the value received for their dues is also satisfactory.

- 3) Services that are not physics related that were discussed included the on-line APS Marketplace and the GEICO insurance plan.
 - A) The APS Marketplace was not heavily used, was not unique in its services, and was discontinued as the vendor folded along with many other dot-coms in 2001.
 - B) The GEICO insurance plans are not heavily used, but highly cherished by the members who

take advantage of this benefit. There is positive cash flow to the Society and GEICO is also pleased with the relationship.

4) Options for the upcoming APS Directory were discussed at length. Each mailed issue of the directory costs several dollars and electronic alternatives were provided to lower costs for the last directory. In 2000, over 10,000 members requested a CD copy and over 2,000 opted to use on-line access only. For just the identity of members, the on-line access is convenient to use and is updated daily. However, some members (perhaps notably seniors) and some overseas members may not have on-line access.

Recommendations for the 2002-2003 Directory were made:

A) The CD version is not very easy to use. If the same data base and search mode that is used on-line were to be used it would have improved utility and should perhaps even be easier to produce.

B) The opinion that many members, especially senior and over seas, need printed copies because of limited access to the internet should be checked by some sort of informal survey.

C) There was reluctance to charge extra for the printed copy. A charge could be construed as a dues increase and should avoid this option.

D) Include the historical data in the printed directory on the APS website.

5) Member Certificates: There were some discussions this year about making a membership certificate available to members. There was not much support for a certificate but it was suggested that members who are new graduate students may value the recognition. A major concern of the Committee was that the certificate could be construed as an endorsement or to mean something more than it should. Staff will contact the Society of Physics Students to see if giving a certificate is a feasible.

6) Member Pricing of Journals: The consensus of the Committee was to maintain member journal pricing at a level of 10% or less of the Tier 1 institutional prices.

7) Online Access to Journals: The Committee endorsed a proposed limit on the number of journal articles that a single member could download to 300 per year and 450 for multiple subscriptions. Data on clear abuse was presented to the Committee and the proposal went to Council for approval.

8) Member Retention: The APS does very well on member retention, which remains in the lower 90% range. The rate is even higher for APS Fellows at 94 - 95%. An improved system of repeated e-mail and paper renewal notices, along with a courtesy call by a national telephone service to lapsed members, seems to be having good results. The increased email notices and online renewal options are also decreasing invoicing costs. Since the schedule is new, specific amounts on cost savings are not available yet.

On a positive closing note, APS Membership totals appear to be on the increase. Numbers show the same growth pattern recorded in the 1999 Centennial Year. The official FY01 count was 41,570.

W.B. Herrmannsfeldt, Chair, COM, November 13, 2001