

Report of Feb 25, 2016

## Action items for council

- Modify constitution
- Decide about society “voice”
- Other suggestions for communications

## Overview

We have added a new communications director position. Brian O’Meara has held this since Jan. 2016. **We have not yet modified the constitution to specify duties.** Rod Page did this unofficially for years. Paul Lewis completed a move from our previous hosting to Weebly: easier to change the site (GUI interface). This took a lot of work on Paul’s part. The vision is for the new site to be simpler to maintain, and clearly differentiate the Society from the journal we run: for most journal info, we redirect folks to the journal site. We might at some point think about using Github + Jekyll or something like that for hosting, but I think keep it on weebly for the next year or two before re-evaluating.

Following a suggestion from Rod Page, we have hooked IFTTT to the advance access article feed from the journal. When an article gets posted, its title gets tweeted from our Twitter account and its title, authors, and abstract get posted in our Facebook page. The tweets don’t seem to get much traction, but the Facebook posts get a few likes. There hasn’t been discussion of the articles themselves. I’m not sure if this is a good thing: it could be a robust discussion of issues a paper raises, or it could devolve to ripping apart a paper – especially problematic if the authors are not on Facebook. So far the tone has all been ok. Folks have also been posting other articles or news of SSB interest.

## Facebook

On Facebook we have 1578 members. Our group is set up so that members have to be approved by existing members, but then any member can post. I put up a poll asking if we should switch to model where anyone can join but posts have to be approved. Folks overwhelmingly chose the current model. There had been a backlog of several months of people who had asked to join but hadn’t been approved. Wait times for approval have now dropped to typically a few days. The metric I use for approving is looking at the applicant to see if she or he seems appropriate: are they a spam account with tons of groups but no info or do they have lots of information about research projects, a clear bio affiliation, or so forth. It’s not limited to people who are members of SSB.

## Twitter

Our Twitter followers are now at 4289. Just for comparison, American Naturalist is 6121, SSE is 614 (but they've only done 122 tweets). I've started tweeting a bit about #Evol2016 and this will ramp up as we approach the conference. I made sure SSB as an org presented a neutral face with the "parsimonygate" flap over Cladistics' editorial about requiring parsimony in their papers – clearly SSB members have strong opinions, but SSB as a whole has no opinion.

## Voice

This brings me to the question of SSB's "voice". I'm very conscious of not having SSB speak about issues that might be controversial: advocating for methods, talking about allocations to NSF, etc. However, what about things that presumably aren't controversial? I'm thinking about things like open data, increasing diversity in STEM, etc. I don't think we should touch on these a lot, but I think some of it could work. For example, when NSF put out a letter warning that Title IX violations can jeopardize federal funding, we could have tweeted a link to the letter, but we stayed silent. I definitely would bias it towards not putting us out where it might be controversial to members, but I think SSB favors open data (thus Dryad, Treebase requirements), broader participation (our sponsorship of workshops), etc, and so we could talk about those where relevant. But **I'd like some guidance from others on this.**

## Other suggestions

What other suggestions do folks have about communications? Anne wants us to put out a newsletter, for example, so thoughts on what that should contain? Other areas of social media, like instagram? Other ways to "brand" SSB content: distribute slides from workshops we sponsor, for example? I think there are ways to show our Society is more than just a journal, but we also have to make sure this remains sustainable.