

AIS Membership Advisory Group Report
May 7, 2006

The primary purpose of any “society” locally or nationally is to connect like minded individuals for a specific purpose. With the advent of the internet the rules have not changed but they have raised the stakes for groups as tightly defined as the American Iris Society.

The gradual decline of membership over the past decade has not been confined to AIS alone. Rose, Daylily, Daffodil, and Orchid have all been struggling with declining membership for similar reasons. With that in mind the following are areas that should be looked at to stem that decline and provide AIS with increased relevance to today’s gardener.

Line items preceded by “N” relate to new memberships, “RN” to renewing memberships.

- N Bring ITJ’s and Older AIS Bulletins to go with Program/Slide Sets. Sign them up on the spot explaining the advantages of Membership.

Membership advantages at this point are limited to receiving 4 Bulletins/yr and the ability to become an AIS Judge.

- N Assist local Garden Centers with their plant sales and give Programs explaining “iris culture” to customers, possibly combining with local Iris Sales. Sign them up on the spot explaining the advantages of Membership.

- N 50% Of an Affiliates members are Non AIS Members. Sign them up on the spot explaining the advantages of Membership.

- N Join “Garden Writers of America” @ \$275/yr to encourage more articles on iris in national and regional magazines.

1. Take out a booth at their “Symposium” to generate buzz on irises.
2. Market irises as the #1 perennial in the garden.

- N Develop and market an iris logo/mascot that is appealing to younger potential members.

- N Develop and market an annual full color magazine for the general public. Do this in conjunction with the various Sections and Co-operating Societies.

- N Market “special events” held by affiliates in your local newspapers. (Awards Won, Garden Tours, Plant Sales etc.) Sign them when they arrive explaining the advantages of Membership.

N/RN Provide 2 for 1 membership deals to new and renewing affiliate members.

N/RN Provide 2 for 1 membership deals to new and renewing section members.

RN Conduct a “dropped member survey” to define why a first year member chose not to renew their membership. Use resultant data to guide future discussions.

RN Set up and provide mentors to new members

1. To help get them involved in the areas that interests them.
2. Provide them with transportation to meetings until they get in the habit of and look forward to going.
3. Involve them early on in the affiliates/regions activities.

RN Include with each “New Member Packet” a comprehensive calendar of events for the Region assigned. These should be available from the Regional Bulletin Editor or RVP.

N/RN Provide for online new/renewal memberships through the AIS Website.

Electronic Memberships (E-Memberships)

N/RN A bottom up review of the products and services this type of membership might offer and a business case for it must be conducted before it can proceed past the “wish list” phase. That being said here follows the wish list.

1. Gain new members. Who would/could we attract?
 - A. People that are internet savvy and might want to network with the AIS and gain information and contacts, but would not join the society otherwise.
 - B. People who are members of the society but want more, possibly because they lack an affiliate nearby. Should it provide services that a local club might accomplish?
 - B1. Judges training online
 - B2. Programs
 - B3. Plant/seed exchanges
 - B4. Auctions
 - B5. Chat rooms
2. Maintain existing members.
 - A. Provide services that are too expensive to provide in other media.
 - 1a. Provide an online photo encyclopedia.
 - 2a. Provide cultural information by region of the country.
 - 3a. Perhaps some of the services already provided on the website, such as the registration look up be moved to this e-members site and that be a perk of e-membership.
 - B. Provide services that are partly redundant with the current membership.

- 1b. Provide the bulletin online. Perhaps with extras that could not be included because of space in the bulletin.
 - 2b. Offer hybridizers that have a color add in the bulletin a chance to picture their new introductions on the website.
 - 3b. What else could we place here, Judges lists, minutes, business items?
3. If we are having an e-membership that we charge for, it must be perceived as worth the cost even if that is only a few dollars more than the present membership. It also has to be able to pay its costs, Server, webmaster, etc. And it must have content that is current and variable.

Additional expertise as to technology and effort required to accomplish “e-memberships” still needs to be brought to bear on this area. The pricing structure also requires a thorough review since there are many variations in existing AIS Memberships to consider.

- e-member only
- e-member w/ hard copy of Bulletin
- e-Life member
- single, dual, annual and triennial

Respectfully Submitted,

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AIS Membership Secretary

Aided and abetted by the many members of the AIS Membership Advisory Group

Bob Pries	Mac Shaw	John Jones	Ellen Gallagher	Ann Violette
Jack Loving	Jean Morris	Jim Morris	Joyce Poling	Terry Aitken
	Tracy Plotner	Jay Hudson	Pat Hayden	Brad Kasperek

And the combined wisdom of all those on AIS Discuss.