

# AIS Public Relations and Marketing Committee Report Spring 2012

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The AIS Public Relations and Marketing Committee has as its core mission *the dissemination of information (educational and otherwise) about our favorite flower, the iris.*

This committee has set to work on several main core-value goals. Here are few of them:

- 1- Spread the word about iris, especially in the U.S., and also worldwide.
- 2- Increase membership, especially E-membership in the U.S., and also worldwide.
- 3- Diversify ways to increase AIS revenue.
- 4- Increase printed and electronic information about AIS and the iris.
- 5- Increased connectivity within AIS, the Board, affiliates, cooperating societies, and members by researching new and improved communication tools.

## **Progress on existing initiatives**

- **Encyclopedia approximately 60% “complete”. 44,000 pages, 34,000 images, backlog of 3,000 images in hand to be put up, promised about 30,000 images**
- **Facebook, 5000+ fans, expect to have 7500 by end of June**
- **Blog: 115+ posts; Blogging Team consists of 10 bloggers; 30,000+ Page views to date**
- **Google Plus: 250+ Followers**

## **Electronic Strategy**

**Educational and Gaining Members:** These two goals, educating the public and attracting members is a slow, steady process. By providing services such as Facebook, The Encyclopedia, and The Blog, we not only fulfill a part of the mission of the AIS, but we provide a service that is appreciated by our members and Irisarians worldwide. People may choose to become members to support these efforts.

The Public Television model: It should be noted that for every 100 viewers of Public Television only 5 become members, even with annoying pledge drives. Nonetheless, considering the huge number of users of these services (as noted above) the potential is still great for adding members. Since this is being written a month before the board meeting we share the following forecast: Over 5,000 fans will be on Facebook by the meeting; over 350,000 views/50,000 visitors will go in April to the Encyclopedia; and over 35,000 will be users of the blog. Before one jumps for joy, let's point out that we

should not expect a sudden 5% of these figures to become members. That is accomplished through appeals, subtle or otherwise. For example, on any one day between 70 and 250 people are looking at the Facebook page. A single appeal to join may only create 0-15 people, and appeals cannot be too frequent or that will discourage visiting the page. Other numbers include 0-15 people are suddenly interested in joining a local club, and thus eventually the AIS. The process is slower than one can imagine. The Encyclopedia has an appeal to join AIS at the bottom of most pages, but individuals do not always view the whole page. For example, visitors are asked to “like” (via a Facebook button encrypted in) the Encyclopedia at the bottom of the home page. About 171 have done so, but there are over 300 registered users of the Encyclopedia. The lower number of “likes” results from two facts. Only Facebook users can “like” the page and not everyone scrolls to the bottom. The number of people reading an article on the blog varies from 50 to 300+. Despite these limitations in 2 months 60 members were added to e-membership.

### **Suggestion for Improving Results**

It is important to make joining easy and not confusing. The area to join AIS by E-membership could be improved. Presently E-membership is a first choice in a list of standard member levels. It would be better if the PayPal join line was separated from the list of standard memberships and placed where E-membership is discussed, because at present it appears that all the types of membership are E-memberships.

### **ACTION: Separate PayPal line of E-membership from the list of other types of membership.**

It was agreed that E-membership was to be one year at a time without the plethora of choices for regular membership. It is easier to make a sale if there are fewer choices, but PayPal offers a feature whereby one can check a box and have membership automatically renewed on the credit card. This feature could eliminate all the renewal notices for a large group of members.

### **ACTION: Provide automatic renewal box on E-membership PayPal.**

If we use Public Television as a model, then it is obvious that giving something with membership helps. We are working on the voucher program. It is almost there and can enhance any membership campaign immensely when it goes into effect. We also give *Basic Iris Culture* to new members. We should consider other perks of membership. Most successful organizations also give members a standard discount off storefront merchandize. We could raise all the prices 20% for the Storefront list price and then give members 20% off. While many sales will be to members, we should not discount the possibility of selling to non-members, and by offering a discount with membership we may increase the numbers who might join.

### **ACTION: Provide for 20% AIS members' discount**

### **E-communications**

Our membership can help us improve the Iris Society. Now that we have E-membership we could be communicating with these members on a regular basis. Some ways that this might be beneficial are:

1. Announcing the availability of a new product or service: example, R & I for 2012 is now available
2. Answering questions of new members, explaining misunderstood issues to old members
3. Reminder for meetings or conventions
4. Taking surveys to understand perception of member services: example, links to various surveys on Survey Monkey
5. Monthly bulletin board of Iris News

### **For your information**

**Google Grant Approved:** Google promotions are pending approval. Google has authorized a non-profit grant of \$329/day in Google ads. Although this amounts to \$100,000/ year in potential to promote AIS, only a fraction of this can be realized. Nonetheless, potential for selling AIS products or memberships is great.

### **Unfinished Business**

Despite approval by the Board last year, the registrar has as of March 11 yet to add the request for images with registration to the registration form. Most registrants are unaware of this policy. The new introductions for 2012 must now be gathered directly from each hybridizer for the Encyclopedia.

### **AIS New Member Voucher Program**

After Board approval the PR & M Committee began to contact nurseries to explain the New Member Voucher Program and to offer the opportunity to join the program. A letter was sent out explaining this new program and any questions were answered. As of April 1, six nurseries have decided to take part, and several others are considering adding the voucher program. We expect to have at least ten participants by July 1 so that a voucher can be included in each new member packet. We are confident that this Voucher Program will draw new members to AIS, and that it will help nurseries gain new customers.