

## PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING REPORT – FALL 2016

### Iris Encyclopedia 2016 – Bob Pries

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#### Scope of the project

The Encyclopedia has now had 7 years of work; it is hard to convey the enormity of this project. On my bookshelf is *The Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture*, 6 volumes each with 600+ pages and it takes 15” of bookshelf. If we were to print the Iris Encyclopedia it would take 124 similar volumes and 155 feet of shelf space. Currently there are 74,489 pages. Each year my wiki workers and I make over 104,000+ edits of these pages. About 30,000 edits are adding images. Each edit could be as little as correcting a typo, to creating a whole gallery of images, or creating a new entry. Obviously about 1% of these edits are the addition of new registrations. But considering the enormity of the Encyclopedia the changes represent a small proportion of the content and may go unnoticed.

#### Honoring workers

There are four of us who do the majority of the work. Betsy Higgins, John Black, and our Photo-Manager, Terry Lauren, each year do a phenomenal job. They and others have been recognized in the past. This year I would like to add three more names to our list of heroic workers. Janet Smith, who has sent hundreds of images to Terry for inclusion, David Potembski, who has continued to add additional information to historic entries for several years now and Elena Igonina, who has added much information and images to Russian irises and hybridizers. All three have had a significant impact on the content of the wiki. **As in years past, I make the motion to nominate to the Board these three names to receive a certificate of recognition of their contribution.** Because of the quantity of changes each year it is easy to overlook the work being done by many wiki users. By awarding these certificates I hope their contributions are recognized by everyone and others will be inspired to continue their work.

#### Format Initiative

We have been tackling a huge task of reformatting pages on the Encyclopedia. Each page with images will feature a large image that will appear alongside the official registration. Thumbnails of additional images will still appear below and below those, additional information. This is being done for several reasons. First, many people do not scroll down when they open a page. In that case, sometimes they never see an image, only text. People have asked for us to designate search results that have images. By adding a ■ at the start of each entry one can now see, when we are finished, the search results which have images.

Second, the larger images are chosen for quality and conformity to the description. Often historic images taken by iris heroes such as Bee Warburton have faded or shifted in color. They still document form and pattern but appear off on color. But they do represent what was seen closer to the time of introduction. By offering an enlarged image as a best example we feel there is some clarity achieved for those that do not think about the body of attached images.

This project has already been completed for most of the smaller classes of iris. About 15,000 pages have been changed since this spring. We have over another time that many to go. At present, approximately 50% of the entries have images.

## Continuing Initiatives

The AIS online Library now contains 1,279 Articles, including 634 catalogs. Notably two works by Prodan/Warburton “The Eupogon Iris in Cultivation” and “The Eupogon Iris” have been added. I presently have about 200 catalogs on hand awaiting scanning. Scanning takes time, but I purchased out of my own pocket a subscription to Adobe Acrobat in the cloud for \$250 a year and it is easily accomplished.

Allied to the library effort is a restructuring of the roughly 400 botanical species pages. Again a key image is presented to the side of a checklist entry and a bit of key information, but between that and the thumbnails are a series of jump boxes that will speed you to a lower position on the page. These jumps include; References, Synonyms, Chromosome counts, Variations, Hybrids, and Distribution and Cultivation.

References include not only the name of the reference, but for things off copyright, a full text and associated images. More recent references include, where possible, an abstract. I have been including the information for each species from Dykes’ monograph. These provide a small library of information for many species.

The Distribution/cultivation section still needs a great deal of development, but for North American irises it now includes full distribution maps, courtesy of the Biota of North America Project (BONAP).

Reworking the Species section is like writing a new monograph of the Genus Iris, an enormous effort. Many of the new species described in the last 10-15 years require trips to the library to make notes from the journals in which they are published. Sadly, some online journals, I cannot get on my home computer because I am not a recognized taxonomic researcher allied with a university. I am trying to remedy that.

## Recent initiatives

My crew of wiki workers, especially Betsy Higgins and John Black completed this spring an enormous task. They linked every hybridizer to their own hybridizing page which innumerate their registrations and introductions. As we find information we also add biographies for many. There are 3410 hybridizers/scientists in the Bio pages. This was a herculean effort and I thank them.

Again, I put up a gallery of the top award winners, but the demands of other tasks have delayed adding the lower awards to the gallery.

One task that took precedence was the creation of a gallery for the 129 Witt watercolors in time for her obituary publications. Under Botanical Art one can find this gallery.

## Thoughts on yearly statistics

The encyclopedia continues to attract about the same number of users as last year. My analytics show 130,633 unique users between September of last year and September this year. This is a false figure because it is a total of the users for each month. Of course many users return frequently with 336,475 visits over the same period. We do know that there is never less than 8,000 people using the wiki in a given month and in May there are often over 16,000+. My guess is that the wiki services about 25,000 different people each year, which may be the potential for membership in AIS. At some point the Board should have a serious discussion on how we could reach that number. Yes, plant societies are declining but we have never reached our potential so we have room to grow.

## **Voucher Program – Susan Grigg**

The AIS Voucher Program is continuing to be an incentive for joining the American Iris Society. Our local iris society uses the voucher as one of the benefits of becoming a member of AIS. We have available at our meetings, sales, and shows, examples of the voucher and an explanation of the program. See the AIS website for the description of the program and the list of current voucher nurseries. Each new member is send this information in the new member packet.

Since fall of 2016, 475 vouchers have been issued to new or upgraded members. Since our membership is fallen short of goals this fall, I urge all current Board members, committee heads, RVPs, and local affiliate officers to make a concerted effort to use the voucher program as a recruiting tool.

## **News & Notes – Wayne Messer**

**2016 Highlights** - Again the most popular edition was the Special Edition announcing the AIS Medal Awards. It was both the most read and had the most followed link. Working with the Electronic Services and the Iris Encyclopedia, the Special Edition provides a rapid means of announcing the results and directing members to where they can read about and see the winners. Because it is the most read, sort of like the Super Bowl, it is a good forum for including a topic we would like to highlight. This year we used it to thank the judges and to encourage others to become judges. Please give me your suggestions for other topics we should include in the Special Edition.

Constant Contact has recently changed their website and I am just learning how to obtain some of the statistics, so there are fewer numbers in this report. The most recent issue currently has 47% opens vs 18% for non-profits average. It also has a 31% click through rate vs 12% for non-profits. I have yet to find how to determine the fraction opened in mobile devices with the new website. Before the site changes, it was approaching one-third of the opens; so it is becoming a significant portion.

We continue to cover a range of topics, AIS, Regional activities, Sectional activities, and clubs. While many of these we find on the associated websites, we need help from all of you. Send us the topics you would like included, happenings and upcoming events, deadlines, all types of publicity.

In addition to publicizing what has happened and is going to happen in the near future, we attempt to make it easier for our members to find what they need. Two examples from the last 6 months: 1. The Fall Regional meetings were collected in a table (on the Iris Encyclopedia) for easy reference. 2. A simplified version of the Iris Encyclopedia search was created to make it, hopefully, easier to understand.

**What else can we do to help you?**

Wayne Messer

News & Notes Editor

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