March 15, 2017

Communications Director Report

I took over as communications director this past year. One of the first things I realized was that the PES website’s Content Management System (CMS) “Drupal” was slow, difficult to update, and impossible to customize. Jessica Hochman gave me all the materials and resources needed, but the CMS made the work almost impossible. After trying to complete a few simple edits, I was convinced that I could build a new website from scratch and save time from the speed and ease it would give for future website maintenance. After approval from the Executive Committee and consultation with the previous website ad hoc committee, I rebuilt the PES website in summer 2016 and redirected the domain address, using Wix.com as the new CMS. I did the work myself, charging the Society for less than $300 in start-up fee reimbursements. Since then, I have added a PDF viewing app that costs $2.50.

The new design is very sparse and includes a revised logo but the key aspect I am happy to report is that the new CMS is lighting fast and allows me to work efficiently. I am also happy that we have a fully “responsive” site, which means that it converts to browsers on mobile devices. I thank Gert Biesta, David Waddington, Ann Chinnery, Kurt Stemhagen, and Sasha Sidorkin for their critical help with the site design and domain re-reroute, DC Phillips and Nick Burbules for help composing the historical note on the new PES “about” page, and Winston Thompson for his critical evaluation of the aesthetics of layout and design (some of his recommendations remain to be done this year). I thank Ann Chinnery a second time for bearing with me as I tested the site template for this year’s program. Special thanks to Josh Corngold who was supportive and helpful to the max throughout the entire process.

This coming year I plan to add images to the site and to provide the option for PES committees to have their own subpage. I am happy to correspond with committee chairs about what works best for them. I also hope to begin to archive the old site, although much of that archive is a mixed bag. From now forward Josh and Debby has set a wonderful precedent of documents that I hope will continue to give our membership transparent and accessible information.

In addition to the website overhaul, I have tried to be more active on Twitter and Facebook and, with the help of Clarence Joldersma on Facebook, our social media reach has increased significantly. 1663 FB, 543 Twitter. In the next year I hope to add more images there as well.

In years to follow, should I remain communications director, I hope to open a conversation about the creation of custom PES media beyond the Yearbook and other publications, most of all recordings of talks and presentations for live streaming and/or posting to social media, including a PES YouTube channel. But the priority for this year is images; video is the next step.

I am grateful to the Society for their confidence and patience with me in my first year and hope to make the next a step forward with my colleagues Rene and Megan at the helm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Rocha

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