

8 August 2005

TO: SSSP Board of Directors
FROM: 2005 Program Committee Co-Chairs
RE: Final Committee Report

First, we'd like to thank President Gary Fine for giving us this opportunity to serve the SSSP organization and membership. As with any SSSP endeavor, our successful partnership this year owes a debt of gratitude to Michele Koontz. We'd also like to thank the other members of the Program Committee for their assistance. Josh Gamson and Mindy Strombler put together a fabulous array of films; they, as well as Omar McRoberts, also helped us secure discussants and presiders – sometimes on very little notice. They all aided our work tremendously.

Based on our experience this year we have a number of observations and recommendations for the Board and future Program Committees to consider.

1. **Web Submissions and Submission Cover Sheet:** We highly recommend requiring that all conference submissions go through the on-line submission process. In our experience many authors were confused on whether they should use the website or not, whether to submit via email to session organizers, and/or whether to submit in both electronic and paper forms – leading to multiple submissions of the same proposal. They were also unclear whether division sponsored sessions had a different submission procedure than did, say, those sponsored by the Program Committee. Some of this confusion may be addressed by rewording the Call for Papers. For the 2005 meeting the CFP read “Papers, abstracts, or 2-3 page outlines for presentations at division sponsored sessions should be sent electronically to session organizers...” We suggest replacing “division sponsored sessions” with “sessions listed in the Call for Papers” and inserting “via the on-line submission website” after ‘electronically’. In addition to creating confusion, some authors used the option of snail mail submissions as a way to evade the submission deadline. With modification of the website it would also be impossible for authors to submit a proposal without specifying a session or organizer (for more on this point see item 5 below).
2. **Dual Submission Policy and Procedure:** Once again we encountered numerous instances where dual submission proposals were not identified as such. In some cases this meant that two (or more!) organizers accepted the same proposal; organizers then had to reconstruct their sessions once the dual submission was discovered. In addition to creating unnecessary work, this confusion can lead to lost participation. In one instance an organizer was forced to accept a proposal that had already been rejected. Perhaps the website can be configured in such a way that dual submissions are impossible without notification of both organizers?

3. **Formalized Procedure for Organizers Requesting Additional Sessions.**
We suggest the creation of form for the procedure and a deadline date.
4. **Role of Division Chairs.** Given their centrality in the process, the Division Chairs need to be informed of the details and deadlines for the process, including different session types, and who does what --- and when!!
5. **Direct Submissions to the Program Committee:** We feel very strongly that direct submissions to the Program Committee needs to be discouraged. We understand that some proposals do not fit the CFP and that the ethos of SSSP is to encourage and facilitate broad annual meeting participation. However numerous authors seemed to take advantage of the direct submission process as a way, for example, to avoid doing the work of actually reading the CFP and finding an appropriate session (one complained: “Am I actually supposed to read the entire thing in order to find a session?”). We also received direct submissions after the deadline; a few authors noted that they were submitting directly because the online process was closed. Here again it may be helpful to consider rewording the CFP. Potential participants might be encouraged to contact the program committee for “direction” in the event that a proposal does not obviously fit the CFP; in such a case, it may be prudent to have a deadline for contact that predates the final submission deadline. Related to this, it may be helpful to include some language regarding ‘potpourri’ option in the CFP. Typically, submissions sent directly to the Program Committee that are not accommodated in existing sessions are grouped together. Some of these groupings result in extraordinary sessions. Others, however, are less than satisfying – for authors and audience members alike – given that the only thing uniting the diverse papers is that they “don’t fit” the program. Such sessions are poorly attended and post-presentation discussion is stunted.
6. **Alternative Session Formats:** This year’s program continues the SSSP tradition of encouraging innovative scholarship and diverse participation formats, including performances and the joint-sponsored session with SWS, ABS, and ASA. We hope that future programs keep in mind SSSP’s reputation as welcoming of innovative scholarship in form and content.
7. **Calendar of Deadlines.** We suggest a Calendar of Dates with Deadlines.

Respectfully submitted,

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