

MEMORANDUM

To: SSSP Board of Directors
From: Kathleen S. Lowney, Chair
SSSP Accessibility Committee, 2009-10
Re: Committee's Annual Report

The Accessibility Committee has accomplished several tasks this year and we will be considering a draft policy proposal at our committee meeting in August to bring to the Board of Directors.

1. Task 1:

Analyzing the portion of the 'post-Annual Meeting' survey which was focused on accessibility issues. One hundred and eighty-eight members completed the survey and thirteen (7%) made comments about accessibility. I also received two e-mails from members about accessibility issues at the meeting. We have no way of knowing if those two members also made some of the comments on the survey or not. Both of these e-mailed comments were about the topography of San Francisco and how that made the meeting very difficult for those with mobility issues -- and more expensive in terms of needing to take taxis everywhere.

Trends in the comments:

- A. Most common concern was about the hotel (46% of comments), although there was not significant overlap in the comments. Comments ranged from problems using a Mac computer for presentation/e-mail; to slow elevators; to temperature of rooms being too cold for those with certain illnesses, such as fibromyalgia; to some meeting rooms being too small for wheelchairs to fit in comfortably and navigate in the room
- B. Next most common concern involved location of hotel/other associations' meetings, hilliness of San Francisco, and transportation issues related to these issues (30% of comments)
- C. Three other comments were made:
 - 1. Suggestion that the gender neutral restroom needs to have better signage at future meetings
 - 2. Suggestion that guidelines be sent to all members in advance of the Annual Meeting about how to create accessible presentation. Since this already happens, it may mean that this Committee and Michele need to work together on how to make those guidelines more visible to members (i.e., on website, e-mail reminder, etc.).
 - 3. A compliment to SSSP "for its efforts and achievements in making the annual meetings accessible"

2. Task 2:

The Accessibility Committee, the Executive Officer of SSSP, and the Administrative Officer of SSSP all realized that, while there has been a budgetary line item for accessibility needs at the Annual Meeting and the Accessibility Committee also has a budgetary line item, we had no guidelines for how to process such requests. This year Hector, Michele, and I brainstormed a "bandaid" policy to get us through this Annual Meeting and I have constructed a draft policy to take to the Committee meeting at the Annual Meeting.

This year, one member requested professional sign language interpretation of several sessions. The member contacted the Administrative Office early in the year, providing significant time for us to think through how to meet these needs. Michele contacted the Atlanta Visitor's Bureau for help with arranging this and was directed to Sign Language Interpreting Specialists, Inc. (SLIS) and Georgia Interpreting Services Network (GISN).

The initial contact with SLIS made it clear that the \$250 in the Annual Meeting budget for Accessibility Services was not likely to cover the costs. At that time, Michele raised the issue with the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee, and the Committee raised the budget line to \$1200.

The tentative bill for these services is \$1810.10. For the last few weeks, Hector, Michele, and I as well as Valerie Leiter, Chair of the Disabilities Division, have been brainstorming some ideas about the need for policies, how to cover the costs for this year, and so on. I also contacted the Executive Director of the Midwest Sociological Association to learn about its policy (MSS has not dealt with this issue yet).

For this year, the cost of this service will be paid via a combination of sources:

A) revised Accessibility Services budget line	\$1200.00
B) Accessibility Committee budget line	\$ 200.00
C) Contribution by the Disabilities Division	\$ 100.00
D) Dr. Valerie Leiter donation	\$ 100.00
E) Other SSSP member's donation	\$ 800.00*

The Accessibility Committee wishes to thank the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee, the Disabilities Division, Dr. Valerie Leiter, chair of the Disabilities Division, and the other member for her/his contributions to this year's fiscal request.

* Extra monies will allow coverage, should more requests come in for this year. Then we have some additional monies to fund them. At time member donated the money, many of the other monies were not yet in place. Michele contacted the member who requested that the money not be returned, but used, if possible, to bolster next year's budget for these types of requests.

As Chair, I am bringing the following policy to the Accessibility Committee which meets immediately before the Friday Board of Directors Meeting where I will give this report. Obviously, this draft might change at that meeting (see next page).

Suggested Policy (will be taken to the Accessibility Committee meeting for discussion and editing):

1. With the professional costs of interpreting needs, the Accessibility Committee requests that the SSSP Board of Directors and the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee raise the line item from \$250 (or \$1200, as was revised for this year) to \$2500.

Given the costs of professional interpreting services and/or other possible accessibility costs, we feel this is fair increase. The Committee also recognizes that it is a significant increase, however, in this moment of fiscal concern.

2. SSSP Annual Meeting registration materials will ask any member who has a accessibility request to notify the Administrative Office by June 30th. That will give the Administrative Office and/or the Accessibility Committee time enough to locate resources.
3. The Accessibility Committee and the Administrative Office will help any member who requests interpreting services by contacting local area agencies that provide interpreting (unless member does not want us to do this) and get estimates.
4. SSSP will cap services per member in the following ways:
 - A. No more than \$1000 per member (normally), with a cap of \$2500 per annual meeting
 - B. If several members request this service, then each member would receive a percentage of the \$2500 based on number of hours of interpreting needed/requested (i.e., if one member requests only the 80 minutes of 1 session, that should be paid for completely)
 - C. Members will be responsible for rest of costs
5. Accessibility Committee in 2011 will be charged with
 - A. Contacting all sociology professional organizations and find out how this is handled
 - B. Creating a list of possible additional funding sources to supplement SSSP funds
 - C. Brainstorming other ways to fulfill accessibility requests, based on the ADA, the needs of members, skills of Society members, and privacy considerations
 - D. Suggesting revisions to the final policy based on this research