



## **2010-2011 Information Technology Options Committee Report**

Submitted August 1, 2011 by Sarah Hendricks

The Committee was comprised of the following members: Susan Carlson, Chair, August 2010-June 2011; Sarah E. Hendricks, University of Tennessee; Louis Esparza, California State University, LA

This year, the Information Technology Options Committee worked on:

- developing a new website design
- starting a SSSP Facebook page and a SSSP Twitter account
- starting a SSSP graduate student listserv

As of this writing, the graduate student listserv is up and running, the social media accounts are up, the website has been redesigned and the design is in the final stages of implementation.

**SSSP Website Redesign.** Last year, Sharon Shumaker (Administrative Assistant and Webmaster) had drafted a request for proposals for a website re-design project. We also started this year with a budget of \$13,500. Following the 2010 annual meeting, we finalized this document, and selected five website design companies to contact for quotes. Of these, we heard back from three. We selected Distant Grass Design because we felt that the designer, Mark Naylor, understood us as an organization, and the designs in his portfolio included a clean look with features that we were looking for. When he sent the proposal, he had also sharpened and updated our logo (see the previous and new logo above). For the implementation of the design, we felt that it was important to stay with Averra Media, as they are our current website hosts and are responsible for the interface between the website and the database containing our membership and annual meeting information. By early December of last year, in just three months, we chose our favorite design from three mock-ups (with much appreciated input from Héctor, Javier, and Michele), went through two additional rounds of feedback, and the final design files were sent to Averra Media.

**New Design Implementation.** The implementation has not gone as smoothly. Due to the hurricanes and disastrous weather in the South this spring, sudden server issues, and generally the small business that they are, Averra Media missed three deadlines for us (Jan 31, Mar 31, and then May 1). Now they are working to complete the implementation before the Annual Meeting, so as you read this report, the website will hopefully be public. In order to prepare for the launch of the new design, Sarah Hendricks, GRA, has re-formatted the content of each of the webpages on our site several times, in order for the content to look good in the new design.

**New Features.** New features of the website include connections with social networking sites (Twitter and Facebook), an RSS feed, and an interactive Social Problems Forum newsletter section. The SSSP homepage features a graphic banner with rotating images, which we recommend updating three times a year – to roughly coincide with the publication of the Social Problems Forum newsletter, or as needed, to reflect current events and topics of discussion within the society. Sarah Hendricks, the GRA, initially designed the banners for the rotating slideshow. After spending two days on these images, several rounds of feedback, and reaching her limit in terms of technical expertise and design abilities, we outsourced this job to Distant Grass Designs.

**Objectives.** We believe that the website design successfully portrays the activist and social justice aspect of our society, and we expect that it, along with social media presence, will help with membership recruitment. With these changes, we are growing in important directions, entering new forms of communication and engagement. With the design costing \$4050, the implementation top estimate of \$4650, and the banner design of \$135, we are also pleased to expect to complete this project under budget.

The social networking accounts should also be considered tools that are available for any member of the society to better reach out – such as the Membership & Outreach Committee (who have asked about a Facebook account), the Student Board Reps (who requested these accounts last year), the Local Arrangements Committee (who is already using the Twitter hashtag of #SSSP), the Program Committee, the Newsletter editor, etc. **If we want to use the social media to their full potential, it will take initiative, effort, and attention from multiple angles, and this should be publicized and encouraged internally.**

**Resources.** One aspect to monitor is the amount of additional resources these new technological endeavors will cost in terms of money and Administrative staff time. Specifically, updating the banners and associated news stories and doing basic monitoring of Twitter and Facebook posts, will take some (unknown amount of) additional time. Posts will be automated through the RSS feed from the “Latest News” section of our new website, so this level of social media presence should not take much time. We recommend continuing to outsource the design of the banners, but the supervision of the design, such as sending test and images to incorporate into the banners and coordinating feedback, falls to Administrative Office at this point. The news stories could perhaps be coordinated with stories and articles in the Social Problems Forum (in addition to the handful that surface between newsletters).

**2010-2011.** We believe that most of the information and technology goals of the Society have been addressed and completed this year, with the graduate student listserv, the social media accounts, and the pending implementation of the new website. Our commitment for next year is to evaluate this progress, as well as field any additional requests or recommendations that arise.