

Information Technology Options Committee  
2013-2014 Committee Report

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The Information Technology Options Committee (or simply ITOC) serves to evaluate the role of social media in the Society. This includes the Society's social media presence (Facebook, Twitter), email lists and listservs, and primary website. The committee is honored to help SSSP examine its digital footprint in the ever-changing digital world.

In last year's chair report, I proposed that the committee focus on three points in 2013-2014. First, the ITOC should continue evaluating the success of adding additional content to the Society's social media pages. Second, ITOC should renew early efforts to encourage division chairs to add Facebook and/or Twitter accounts while employing our recommended best practices. Finally, ITOC should reexamine our best practices recommendations in light of the changing nature of social media. We find our policy recommendations worked well over the last year, positioning SSSP's social media presence to continue growing in the coming years.

Point one: Adding additional content

Presently, three members are charged with posting to SSSP social media: Dr. Ryon Cobb (Univ. Southern California), Dr. Karen McCormack (Wheaton College), and Dr. Deana Rohlinger (Florida State University). These three members post material

relevant to our discipline, including news articles on social problems and social injustice. They also post material from websites such as Chronicle.com addressing changes in the academy. Webmaster and graduate assistant Lisa East (Univ. of Tennessee) also posts additional announcements and updates from SSSP but not news content from external sites. The committee would like to thank Drs. Cobb, McCormack, and Rohlinger for their work this year in creating an active social media space. We are especially thankful to Lisa East, who has commendably served the Society's interests in her time as graduate student. We wish her the best in her academic career this year as she enters the job market.

Figure one includes a list of articles posted to Facebook since June 24. The articles are a pleasant mix of information from SSSP and other sites. On average, our posters are posting about ten unique posts per week. The content of the news articles (an early concern for ITOC)

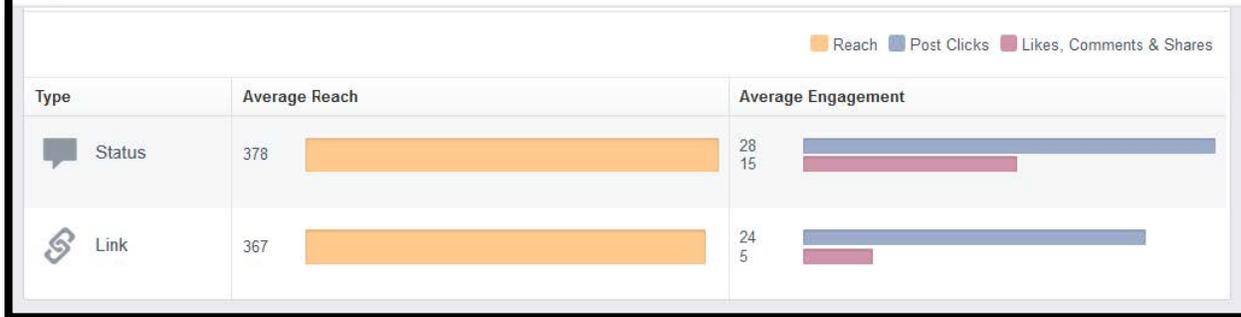
**Figure One: Evidence of Article Activity**

07/01/2014 11:16 pm		ASU officer linked to 2nd controversial case @SociologistRay @DarrickHamilton @SandyDarity @tressiemcpd @blkeducator <a href="http://ow.ly/yGijj">http://ow.ly/yGijj</a>
07/01/2014 1:50 pm		Reminder: Today is the deadline for Program Participants to register for the SSSP Annual Meeting! Register here: <a href="http://ow.ly/yFmiU">http://ow.ly/yFmiU</a>
07/01/2014 11:10 am		Ensuring that your presentation is accessible allows for the greatest participation for all participants at the Annual Meeting. Program Participants for the 2014 Annual Meeting that are
06/27/2014 11:45 am		Be sure to join us on Saturday, August 16, for the Awards Reception, Banquet, and Ceremony! The Awards Reception will be a catered reception with a cash bar honoring our 2014 SSSP
06/26/2014 1:10 pm		Just a reminder that the 2014 Preliminary Program is available online for viewing! Check out the program to start planning your daily Annual Meeting schedule. Search for sessions, program
06/25/2014 12:25 pm		<a href="http://www.salon.com/2014/06/25/walmart_flunks_its_fact_check_the_truth_behind_its_sarcastic_response_to_the_times">http://www.salon.com/2014/06/25/walmart_flunks_its_fact_check_the_truth_behind_its_sarcastic_response_to_the_times</a>
06/25/2014 6:26 am		<a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/06/the-sociology-of-sorry/373273/?utm_content=buffer4906d&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_source=facebook.com&amp;">http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/06/the-sociology-of-sorry/373273/?utm_content=buffer4906d&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_source=facebook.com&amp;</a>
06/25/2014 6:24 am		<a href="http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/06/23/3451313/working-mothers-children/?utm_content=buffer7c7e3&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_source=facebook.com&amp;">http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/06/23/3451313/working-mothers-children/?utm_content=buffer7c7e3&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_source=facebook.com&amp;</a>
06/24/2014 2:24 pm		Want to explore San Francisco's rich history of social justice during the Annual Meeting? Register for a guided walking tour! For descriptions of each tour, visit <a href="http://www.sssp1.org">http://www.sssp1.org</a>
06/24/2014 2:19 pm		In addition to all of the exciting sessions, panel discussions, and events, we are pleased to offer optional conferences and a workshop. For descriptions of each conference and workshop,

has remained true to SSSP's mission and identity. One good example is a recent post about the recent excessive use of force against an Arizona State professor.

Our members are utilizing SSSP's social media. Figure two shows how often our members interact with material posted to SSSP's Facebook page. On average, our social

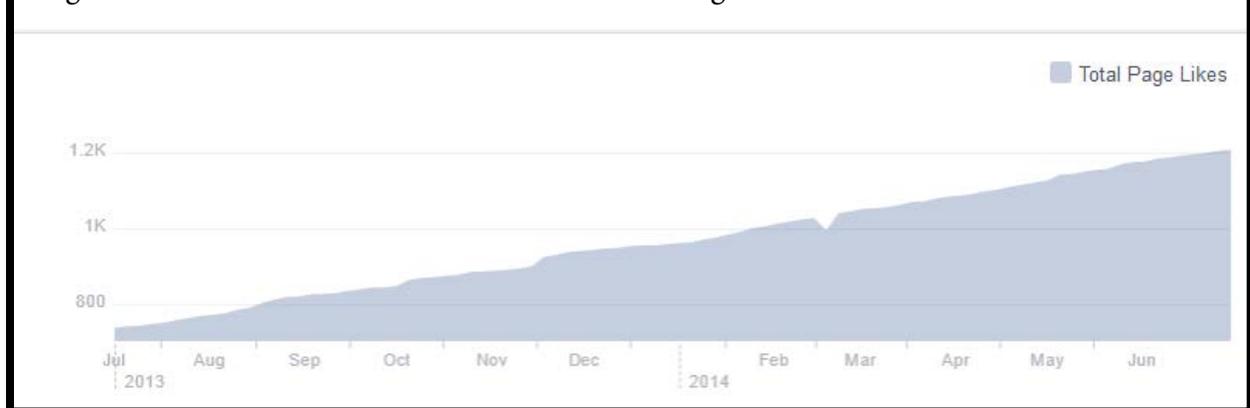
Figure Two: Member Interaction



media status updates reach 378 members. Posts including links reach slightly less (367). Members are accessing both our status updates and links as well as liking the material which helps spread our reach to potential members.

SSSP's social media presence is growing under our earlier recommendations. Figure three charts growth on our Facebook page since the last report. We currently have 1208 likes on Facebook, which is more than Southern Sociological Society (648) and Eastern Sociological Society (808). The growth is also notably steady, aside from a statistical error in the calculations for late February 2014, and has approximately doubled since last year's report.

Figure Three: Follower Trends on SSSP Facebook Page



The Society also recently added an optional moderated listserv for members. This listserv provides an additional means for communicating with members. Dr. Nancy

Mezey (Monmouth University) is the current moderator. Dr. Mezey's term expires after the upcoming meeting. The listserv presently has 244 subscribers.

Point two: Social media and SSSP Divisions

SSSP's social media presence has overflowed into its divisions. Table one lists five social media pages other than SSSP's primary Facebook and Twitter pages in 2012-2013. Table two lists our social media

**Table One: SSSP Social Media in 2012-2013**

<b>Facebook</b>	1. SSSP Page 2. Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division 3. Drinking and Drugs 4. Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Community
<b>Twitter</b>	5. SSSP Page 6. Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division 7. Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division

presence in 2013-2014. Since last year, division chairs in Racial and Ethnic Minorities and Sociology and Social Welfare added Facebook pages. Crime and Juvenile Delinquency added a Google Group, which functions as a closed discussion board.

Although we are pleased with this growth, less than a quarter of the twenty two divisions have social media presence. This could be a point for future development. If the Society elects to continue ITOC another year, I recommend that the committee create a detailed explanation of how to create a Facebook social media

**Table Two: SSSP Social Media in 2013-2014**

<b>Facebook</b>	1. SSSP Page 2. Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division 3. Drinking and Drugs 4. Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Community 5. Racial and Ethnic Minorities 6. Sociology and Social Welfare
<b>Twitter</b>	7. SSSP Page 8. Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division 9. Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division
<b>Google Groups</b>	10. Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

page for Division chairs to help ease them into the process.

### Point three: Reviewing best practices

We feel that our recommendations (attached to this report as Appendix A) remain both effective and viable. We are, as a committee, pleased with the content being posted to the main SSSP Facebook and Twitter pages. The material being posted falls within our recommendations. New pages being added are consistently including Lisa East as a co-administrator. This may be a small issue as Lisa transfers out of this position, and we have asked Lisa to be mindful of this issue.

### Future of ITOC

It has been a pleasure serving as chair of this committee for two years. I would like to thank the previous chair, Dr. Sarah Hendricks (Drake University) for her dedication and hard work in previous years. I also wish to thank my fellow committee members for their service to the Society. Finally, special thanks go to Michele Koontz for her ongoing service to SSSP. Her dedication to the Society inspires me.

ITOC, its members, and chair would be pleased to continue serving SSSP in the coming membership year. We feel that our work in the 2012-2013 (assessed in the 2013-2014 year) demonstrated this committee has been a useful ad hoc for the Society. As chair, I recommend continuing ITOC for one more (and final) year, at which time it can, at the Society's wish, be disbanded and reactivated again if needed in the future. If ITOC is continued for another year, I propose the committee focus on two points next year. First, ITOC should renew early efforts to encourage division chairs to add Facebook and/or Twitter accounts while employing our recommended best practices. I

think this is best achieved by writing a brief (but detailed) guide to creating a Division Facebook page. Second, ITOC should reexamine our best practices recommendations in light of the changing nature of social media. This includes a consideration of new social media sites that may eventually replace Facebook and Twitter as the primary social media sites.

**Information Technology Options Committee Report:  
Recommendations on additional SSSP social media**

Committee members:

James Maples, The University of Tennessee at Martin (chair)

Lisa East, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Slade Lellock, Virginia Tech

Shannon Monnat, University of Las Vegas

Mary Larue Scherer, University of Massachusetts Amherst

**Issue 1: Adding additional media to social media pages**

In evaluating the Society's current usage of social media, the committee feels that the primary SSSP Facebook page (located [here](#)) does an excellent job of disseminating important information about the Society's activities. Lisa East, the current administrator on this account, is a true asset to the Society. The current page effectively communicates Society news, including upcoming deadlines. It is also visually pleasing to the eye.

As suggested by the Membership and Outreach Committee, **we feel that one major improvement to SSSP's online presence would be the inclusion of news and media relevant to the Society's goals and interests.** Examining both ASA and SWS, the inclusion of additional media stimulates follower interest in the site and helps attract additional users.

1A: Who should be responsible?

**We recommend appointing a member of the Membership and Outreach Committee to post noteworthy articles and other media to the Society's social media accounts.** This has at least two benefits. First, appointing a second person will not put additional strain on the current webmaster. Second, this would allow our Membership and Outreach Committee an opportunity to directly communicate with members and potential members. We suggest assigning a one year term to this position. A second option would be electing a student member to take on this post for one or multiple year terms. Members with an interest in media studies may also be prime candidates for this position.

1B: What should be posted?

Deciding exactly what should be posted to the account is less simple, given the many possibilities. **We feel that the appointee should have some leeway on what the appointee elects to post to the Society's social media accounts.** We do offer two general guidelines. First, material posted to any SSSP account should be relevant to the Society's goals. Examples might include news articles about social injustice that help foster discussion of social problems. Second, and turning to ASA and SWS here as examples, it would also be both appropriate and

beneficial to post articles discussing trends in the discipline. Examples might include articles exploring trends in higher education or inequalities in tenure in academia.

We have also considered other options. As an alternative to creating posting guidelines, the Southern Sociological Society is allowing *all* members access to post on the Society's Facebook page. This has mixed results. On one hand, it allows followers the chance to interact with the Society and its members. For example, student members have asked questions on the Society's page, with some of the top researchers in the discipline answering these questions. An open posting option also eliminates the need for a single individual to take the role of actively posting material. However, this means that the Society has less ability to shape its virtual image. For example, a few questionable posts from researchers promoting their own book have occurred. Open access also leaves the SSS Facebook site open to the potential for abuse if a user's account is hacked, although this has yet to be an issue. Further, the absence of an active individual posting to the page lessens the activity on the page overall. Hence, posts may be few and far between on the SSS Facebook page. Given this example, we support having a single individual assigned to this important task.

## **Issue 2. Adding additional social media pages beyond the primary social media accounts**

The Society's social media footprint currently includes email listservs, a website, and its primary Facebook/Twitter account. The ITO Committee understands that David Fasenfest, 2013 Program Chair, intends to utilize social media accounts for the upcoming 2013 meeting. Additionally, there is discussion of creating a new Facebook page dedicated to students, and divisions are currently creating pages dedicated to their areas of interest. **The committee supports creating new pages, but notes that there are issues that must be considered in advance to prevent long-term problems.**

### 2A. Longevity and continuity

In creating social media accounts, the Society needs to keep longevity in mind. While using a single account for each meeting may be effective, it creates a glut of eventually unused accounts that must either be deleted or somehow maintained. Additionally, followers would need to somehow be transferred from page to page, a process that will likely lose followers over time.

**We suggest considering two courses of action in lieu of creating new pages.** First, offer to let the program chair, student committees, and similar groups post to the main SSSP pages. This is a common practice with the Southern Sociological Society and may be the easiest solution. Second, if the Society elects to create a new social media page for a particular event, use the same page from year to year. This allows the Society to retain followers from year to year and eliminates the need to rebuild its followers every year. Additionally, this prevents the potential for dead pages. For example, instead of having a 2013 meeting social media page, simply have a Society meeting social media page that can be reused each year. In the event the program chair

does not wish to use this page, we recommend that Lisa post a link on this page to the SSSP website so members have a source for current meeting information.

As has been noted in previous ITO Committee discussions, continuity is also a major concern with any SSSP social media accounts. **We think the best way to prevent losing access to social media accounts is to include Lisa East as a co-administrator on each account.** Thus far, this approach seems to be working very effectively.

## 2B. Oversaturation and Duplicate Information

**In the event additional pages are created, we suggest ensuring that their areas do not significantly overlap.** Expanding to multiple social media pages on the same platform (e.g., Facebook) may create conditions where members follow multiple SSSP pages at the same time. If the same (or similar) content is posted to each page, followers may begin to receive the same information repeatedly. While this may be beneficial (it behooves us all to hear about conference deadlines two or three times), it may also be off-putting to some followers. It may create conditions where followers elect to hide SSSP posts, closing the line of communication between followers and the Society. However, if the material from each SSSP page is relatively unique (barring important news posts such as conference deadlines), we predict multiple posts will create a synergy effect that enhances the Society's online presence.