

2008 Fall SPA Executive Committee Report

Lynn Kistler

Welcome – Bob McPherron-

AGU has grown larger, and its governance structure has not kept up with its larger size. Lack of communication between the various parts of AGU are a problem. There is a plan to change the governance structure of AGU (details not given).

Fall 2008 Meeting report (Lynn Kistler)

SPA had 1287 abstracts submitted, 550 in SM, 377 in SH, and 360 in SA. With the space allocated for oral talks, 30% of the talks could be oral. These were allocated proportionally, SM had 20 oral sessions, SH had 14, and SA had 13. Thus only SM has continuous oral sessions. SH and SA have time slots with no oral sessions, and sometimes with no sessions at all.

The oral sessions were allocated proportional to the number of talks in each proposed session, including the general contributions.

The web tools for scheduling the sessions work well. The time slots for each section are then pre-allocated by AGU. In the case of SA this year, the oral sessions were somewhat uneven, with many more oral sessions scheduled later in the week than earlier. Because the poster space was very tight, there was a requirement that there had to be almost exactly the same number of posters every day. And so a lot of shuffling had to be done. Thus some of the order of the sessions is not optimal to meet all the additional constraints.

Other notes – there needs be more written down on how various things like special lectures and the town hall meeting are scheduled. There was a lot of confusion on this, both on our side, and on the AGU side.

Comments: Would it be possible to stagger the secretaries so there is some overlap? This is only possible if one of the secretaries serves more than one term, since they are 2 year terms, with elections every 2 years. This has happened in the past.

Press conferences: (Larisa Goncharenko)

3 SPA press conferences are scheduled for this meeting, 2 in SA, and 1 in SM. Larissa worked with Peter Weiss at AGU on getting these going, and found him very helpful. Robert Winglee also tried to solicit ideas for press conferences, and send them to AGU. He got very little response, and was frustrated. It is not clear why his work was ignored by AGU. Did the right person at AGU get the messages?

Spring meeting-(Larisa Goncharenko)

Is a joint meeting with Canada. 9 proposed special sessions in SA. One was moved to a Union session, 4 special session in SM, and 3 special sessions in SH. Good participation by Canadians in the session proposals.

Information technology committee report (Jan Sojka)

The AGU IT committee is discussing archiving the electronic journals, and the other types of supplementary material that we use. They have decided they need to store the electronic archive on 3 tectonic plates. As a start, all the electronic journals will be archived in Taiwan.

There is discussion of turning EOS into an electronic journal, but the advertising in EOS is an important part of the AGU revenue stream. So this can't be changed immediately – need to figure out other ways to make money.

AGU is participating in “Scitopia” which allows searches for articles, references and citations. They are also looking into how video formats, like YouTube, can be archived, and the uses of wiki's and blogs.

Comments-

Is AGU working with any other organizations on these issues? Are they seeing what other societies have done, and learning from other groups successes and failures? Why don't they work with APS and the AIP?

Student Paper Awards (Wiltberger)

For this meeting, there are 254 student papers to be judged. Mike developed a system to find referees by sending e-mails to anybody who was a co-author on a paper in the particular session. 720 requests were sent out. A large number of people replied that they were not coming. Mike estimates that now 90% of the papers are covered, but most are only covered by one person. The evaluations can also be entered on-line.

Comments-

There were some concerns about having different people judge each of the papers – there is no way to normalize the responses. A suggestion was made to have poster session chairs be the judges of the papers in that session. There was some concern that some poster sessions would have too many papers to judge. Better access to AGU records would help in selecting referees. This would allow the software to only ask people who had registered for the conference, and to exclude students from the list.

AGU Publications. EOS (Sibeck report, given by McPherron)

EOS has organizationally changed for the better. However, there are not as many SPA articles being written as there should be. People are too busy. They may be submitting these types of articles to other places, such as the Space Weather journal. Book reviews, articles that synthesize, articles on the relationship between policy and science, and news and events are all desired.

GRL

McPherron stated that he had heard a lot of dissatisfaction with GRL. M. Chen reported on statistics. There were 3811 papers submitted in all fields, 643 in space science. The average number of days for a decision is 28. The acceptance rate varies from 29-48 percent, with the average around 37%. The space science editors are about average: Chen - 41%, Ostgaard, 38%. Under Moldwin, it was 57%.

The policy at GRL is to reject papers that require a “major revision.. Some people feel that the policy is just “cooking the books.” By rejecting papers, instead of requesting a revision, they are reducing their days for decision, and reducing their acceptance rate. But many of the papers ultimately do get accepted, after a revision and submission as a “new” paper. The AGU representative defended this policy, saying that the goal was timely publication of exciting new results, and this is not possible for a paper requiring major revisions.

Space Weather (Lou Lanzerotti)

The AGU staff that works on Space Weather is terrific. They lost a publisher, which has put more stress on the staff.

They are running out of money – it is not clear that they can continue to publish the quarterly hard-copy. Because they have had no continuity in the publishers there is no one who is looking for advertising or for foundation grants to help. The publication does get a lot of press and exposure. They reject a number of articles as inappropriate for the journal. Other articles are rejected with advise to the authors on how to rewrite it to be appropriate.

Reviews of Geophysics (Pete Riley)

Being editor is a great initial experience, but becomes frustrating. It is hard to find people to write the articles that actually follow through. The perception of the journal is not so good at this point, so people are not sure it is worth taking the time to write the article.

SPA Newsletter (Guan Le)

Newsletter is doing well. Many people expressed how helpful it was. SPA is one of only three sections of AGU that has a newsletter. There are 2725 subscribers at this point, 40% from non-US internet domains.

Radio Science. – no report.

EPO – Mark Moldwin

AGU has started organizing “Exploration Station” a family event the day before AGU. The first one was in St. Lauderdale, and only SPA participated. The second was at this meeting. Some other sections participated. They were targeting for 1000 people.

For teachers, AGU has organized the “Geophysical Information for Teachers (GIF) workshop. This year it has a focus on Mars. There will be a public lecture at the Exploratorium on Thursday on the Phoenix mission.

AGU has also put together a brochure on how SPA scientists can become involved.

AGU Awards (Mike Schulz)

For fellowships, there will be ~55 new fellows per year, so 4-5 in SPA. This year there were 21 nominations. The SPA committee could forward 7 of those names, and then 4-5 could be selected by the AGU committee. The AGU committee has one member from each section, and since SPA doesn't have much overlap with the other sections, a strong case needs to be made.

Scarf award (Lopez).

Lopez is trying to make the processes simpler, and less of a burden for the reviewers. The theses will be uploaded to a website, and distributed from there, avoiding the need to duplicate and send out hard copies. A several page summary of the thesis will be included, so the whole thesis doesn't have to be read, at least for the initial cut. He is still waiting to hear back from AGU on if this is set up. The deadline for submission will be in mid-February.

New Awards

Basu international early career award (J. Makela).

Awarded to someone who earned his/her PhD in the last 7 years, works in a developing country, and has overcome hardships. Has a committee to help nominate. Received 6 nominations this year.

Max Hammond – confusion over this award. It is a travel award, and AGU selects the recipient. The method is not obvious. Discussed giving the award to a student paper award recipient, to attend the next meeting.

AGU journal website (Lanzerotti)

The journal website is obsolete. It should allow searches by keywords, etc. to make it easier to find papers.

SPA Budget (McPherron).

The budget is based on the average contributions for the last 2 years. For 2009 it is \$11029. It is spent on special items. Some was contributed to Max Hammond fund. Some was used to fund Parker to attend the Spring AGU.

Lockheed Martin contributed \$5000 to SPA, and the money was used to help support the SPA dinner.

Revision of Bylaws. (Nancy Crooker).

We do not follow the current bylaws. The bylaws state that only the officers should be members of the executive committee. It also says that there should be 1 business meeting/year for the entire section. Neither one of these are followed. Nancy suggests that we change the bylaws to reflect our actual operation.