

**AAUW Poughkeepsie Branch
Communications Vice-President Annual Report 2020-2021**

Members

Barbara Durniak: Communications VP
Claudette Hennessy: Database Manager
Cyd Averill: Newsletter Editor
Katherine Friedman: Assistant Newsletter Editor
Bonnie Auchincloss: Photography Chair/Coordinator
Margaret Nijhuis: Web Editor
Joanne Scolaro: Assistant Communications
Mary Coiteux & Sabashnee Govender: Facebook
Jackie Goffe-McNish: Public Relations Chair
unfilled: Technical Support

Overview

The pandemic changed the way things were done but did not affect the quality or the quantity of the Communications team's accomplishments. Without opportunities to meet face-to-face, the branch's media vehicles – website, newsletter, emails, and Facebook page – ably met the challenges of keeping members informed and engaged. The leaders compensated for the lack of photographs by adding unique and eye-catching graphics to help tell print stories.

Being able to meet via Zoom greatly facilitated the work of the Website and Database committees. Questions from those committees about protecting members' contact information and other sensitive data led to the formation of a Privacy and Security committee, which is in the process of identifying current practices and exploring ways to carry out the recommendations made to the board this spring.

Amazon Cloud Storage

The Amazon cloud storage is used to store photographs depicting branch activities, backfiles of documents such as annual reports, meeting minutes, the newsletter, and new this year, "operational manuals" that detail procedural aspects of branch officers and off-board positions.

To be completed: As operational manuals are developed and stored in the cloud, make sure they are referenced in the applicable job description in the Working Rules.

Email Announcements

Margaret Nijhuis and/or Joanne Scolaro send out email notifications and reminders for branch events such as meetings, programs, and items of interest. Margaret resolves email "bounce back" issues.

Facebook

Our Facebook postings have been coordinated with the Branch Webmaster and Newsletter Editor and make use of the graphics used by both coordinators. Postings include timely reminders of upcoming events, news and photos from the Interest Groups & the Initiatives as well as other items of interest for the membership. Postings are also used to promote interest in branch Activities and Goals to potential members. Information and graphics from State and National AAUW have been shared throughout the year. Zoom information about the monthly General Membership Meetings, and other gatherings were posted. Zoom photos were not posted due to privacy concerns.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Coiteux

Mary also wrote Facebook content guidelines for the Working Rules committee to consider as part of the on-going review.

Membership Database

As detailed in last year's Communications VP report, it became necessary to find a new hosting site and software solution for the membership database. A committee, consisting of Sheila Zweifler and Mary Scalas-Annis (Membership Co-VPs), Donna Augustine, Margaret Nijhuis, Darlene Yerdon, Claudette Hennessy Database Manager) and Barbara Durniak met throughout the year to manage this project.

Highlights:

- Claudette successfully moved all the membership data, including archived files, into an Access database and created search functions that mirrored those of the former database
- The Membership Co-VPs redesigned the profile section of the membership registration form so that each interest group and initiative is listed. The volunteer sections were also redesigned so that they are more specific and relevant to the branch's needs. Each data point on the registration form has a corresponding field in the database, which will make information retrieval more precise and targeted.
- The Access database, while functional, has some limitations. Claudette is working on a WordPress version, which could ultimately provide more functionality as well as distributed access (through a low-cost hosted solution).
- Darlene Yerdon has agreed to serve as the Database Assistant Manager and will be assisting Claudette with routine tasks throughout the year.
- In the spring of 2021, Philip Durniak, son of Barbara Durniak, worked with the Database Committee as part of a course assignment for his MBA consulting degree at Northwestern University. His report was distributed to the database committee this month.

In addition to all of the above, Claudette carried out all the regular duties of the Database Manager:

- Entered records for new members; updated existing members' records as changes occur and are reported
- Prepared the directory for publication
- Published updates to the directory at intervals
- In lieu of the Open House, updated the Membership booklet for online publication
- Upon request, provided reports from the database to board members and other branch leaders
- Made sure our local database is in synch with the national database.

To be Completed: Because this position works so closely with the Membership Co-Vice Presidents, going forward the Database Managers will report to them. If the Membership Co-VPs so desire, there can be continued exploration of a WordPress or other database solution to store membership data that solves some of the shortcomings of the Access solution currently being used. Another ongoing task is to complete a procedural manual, to be stored on the cloud.

Newsletter & Calendar

Cyd Averill created and published the branch newsletter monthly from Sept. – June. Starting in May, she will have administrative authority to upload it to the website. Starting with the March issue, in keeping with the recommendations of the Privacy and Security committee, Cyd removed all contact information from the newsletter with the exception of the membership and program vice-presidents and the interest group coordinators. Kathy Friedman continues to mail a print copy to 15 members. The section of the Working Rules relating to non-branch announcements in the newsletter was updated by a subset of the Website Committee.

Kathy Friedman collects information from the interests groups and maintains the online calendar.

Photography Committee

In-person meetings were cancelled this year due to Covid-19, so photography committee was unable to document branch activities. In conjunction with the Privacy and Security Committee, a Photo Release form is being developed, with the recommendation that it be put in Appendix C (Forms) of the Working

Rules. Because there was no Open House, Bonnie Auchincloss did home visits to obtain member portraits.

To be completed: In addition to the photo release form, the Photography Committee will be working on a procedural manual, to be stored in the cloud.

Public Relations

Jackie Goffe-McNish agreed to serve as Public Relations chair. In addition to traditional publicity activities, this position will act as a liaison with community groups, with the goal of sharing program and other event information.

To be Completed: Work with Jackie to identify potential alliances once in-person gatherings are permitted.

Technical Support

Due to Covid, there has been no need for technical support in the traditional sense this year. Apparently the Technical Support Coordinator position has been vacant for a few years. The branch's audio/visual equipment has been distributed as follows: Bonnie Auchincloss continues to store the branch computer, mouse, LCD projector, screen and an extension cord. Margaret Nijhuis passed on to Barbara Durniak the speaker system and microphone stand.

To be Completed: Determine whether this off-board position should be filled and if so, what the responsibilities should be.

Website

As detailed in last year's Communications VP report, it also became necessary to find a new solution for the branch's website. A committee, consisting of Margaret Nijhuis (Web Editor), Diane Jablonski, Cyd Averill, Mary Coiteux, Joanne Scolaro, Claudette Hennessy, and Barbara Durniak met throughout the year to manage the project. Fortunately there was a ready-made technical solution – migrating to Site Resources, a WordPress-based platform endorsed by AAUW National. Highlights:

- Over the summer Margaret moved some backfile material to cloud storage
- A timeline for moving backfiles off the web and into cloud storage was established; this work will be done annually during the summer months
- The annual review of webpages was done in late summer to ensure that all content to be migrated was up to date
- The committee did a website audit of pages on the current website to determine which pages were still relevant
- Main and sub-menus for the new website were established
- In November the board approved signing a Service Agreement with Site Resources, along with a years' worth of technical support at a cost of \$119. Site Resources has been very responsive to all questions.
- Access to the platform was provided on 12/2/20. Administratively Margaret, Joanne, and Cyd are Super Editors and Barbara is an Editor in the Site Resources system
- The Photography committee supplied several photos of our area's iconic bridges, which are featured in a rotating display on the website's homepage
- By mid-January, Margaret and Joanne had transferred all content to the new platform
- The new website went "live" on 2/12/21
- An article about the new website was included in the March 2021 newsletter
- The Kings were not in a position to set up a re-direct from the old website to the new one, so Margaret put a link to the new site on the old website, and she and Joanne stripped the old site of content so as to prevent users from accidentally ending up there.

In addition to all of the above, Margaret and Joanne carried out all the regular duties of the website editors:

- Kept the homepage up to date
- Made changes, as needed, to other pages

Margaret also wrote website content guidelines for the Working Rules committee to consider as part of the on-going review.

To be Completed: If Mary King is able to find the login for the old website's domain name account, she and Barbara will work together to transfer the account to the branch before the domain name expires on August 8th. This will prevent the domain name from being purchased by potentially bad actors. If Mary cannot get into the domain name account, there may not be anything we can do. The Working Rules need to be updated to reflect that we now have website editors and no longer need a Webmaster, since Site Resources maintains the software. According to our Site Resources contact, Google Analytics will be integrated into the Site Resources platform sometime this coming year. This will enable us to monitor traffic to the website.

Zoom Manager

A committee was convened last fall to formulate policies and procedures relating to the branch's Zoom account; these documents are part of the Working Rules. The committee continues to meet with the program co-chairs and presenters prior to each program to work out logistics. In January Monique asked Laura Ramsey Russell to be Zoom Manager. Laura agreed but has yet to be able to assist with any branch Zoom events. Betty Harrell and Margaret Nijhuis have been assisting with Zoom. As part of the Working Rules review, going forward the Zoom Manager will report to the Program Co-chairs.

To be Completed: Create a job description for the Working Rules.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Durniak
Communications Vice President