

**PYM Communications Committee
Report to RepCom 2018
February 11, 2018**

The Communications Committee has been focused on these projects and activities so far this year:

1. **Website:** Extensive updates and refinements to the website have been made, new job descriptions have been drafted and progress is ongoing on role-based emails and other projects.
2. **Technology Selection and Recommendation Policy:** A draft policy has been developed with the expectation of briefly reviewing this topic at RepCom, and it then will be submitted for review and feedback to the RepCom body.
3. **Directory and Email Services Requirements:** An initial draft of the requirements has been completed for a new comprehensive online membership directory and email service capability.
4. **Registration Pilot Project for RepCom 2018:** We created an online form to relieve the local arrangements committee from having to start from scratch and manage the various data on their own.
5. **Annual Session 2018 registration effort:** This effort is underway in preparation to launch the updated registration process by mid-May (or earlier), under the oversight of the registrars.
6. **Communications Committee job description:** A draft (link below) has been developed and is being refined for distribution and review by Nominating, RepCom and then the wider PYM community.

The committee comprises:

1. Eric Moon, Berkeley
2. George Mills, Palo Alto – Website Redesign working group lead/convener, Web Content Team member; Secretariat Clerk
3. John McCarthy, Strawberry Creek – Website Redesign and Directory & Collaboration Tools working groups
4. Lawrence Alderson, Orange County – Clerk (interim) / Convener, Resources and Funding working group lead, Directory & Collaboration Tools working group
5. Mary Klein, Palo Alto – Directory & Collaboration Tools working group lead, Resources and Funding working group
6. Alyssa Nelson, Davis, – Ex-officio as Youth Programs Coordinator, Website Redesign working group, Web Content Team
7. Roger Price, Davis - Ex-officio as IT Administrator
8. Sharon Gates, Orange Grove – Ex-officio as PYM Assistant to the Clerk
9. We currently have two additional active working group members:
 - 9.1. Kerwin Flowers, La Jolla – Directory & Collaboration Tools working group
 - 9.2. Arthur Kegerreis, Orange Grove – Website Redesign working group

Our active working groups* include:

1. Website: Works on website design, maintenance and support
2. Resources and Funding: Addresses funding and resource needs for the committee
3. Directory & Collaboration Tools: Working toward having an online PYM directory capability, including supporting the capability for email distribution lists and directory file sharing
4. Web Content Team: Individuals who create and maintain the website content

We are also considering establishing Secretariat and Social Media working groups and expect to be seeking additional volunteers.

Our capacity and effectiveness need development:

1. The committee has a long list of action items (38 as of this writing) and is in a continual cycle of addressing mostly the highest priority items while numerous important activities are unattended. Prioritizing our work has enabled us to address the most urgent needs while others remain unmet, so this is a concern; several important pending projects are idling due to capacity constraints, such as a pilot online discussion forum capability, which might be very useful for committee work.
2. As the permanent committee structure evolves and the committee matures, we expect to draw on a significantly larger pool of PYM community resources for our work, expanding the working groups, adding ongoing interest / discussion groups and forums and hopefully increasing the engagement in and support for our work.
3. As our work progresses to a mature state in defining the requirements and future direction for the website and other communications tools and supporting resources, the potential need to employ paid contract and intern resources will be further considered.

Working Group Updates

1. Website

- 1.1. We have continued to make incremental improvements to the existing PYM website. *Your feedback is always welcome: contact us at pym.website@gmail.com.*
- 1.2. Conducting user tests with various PYM Friends has given us unexpected insights and stimulated a number of changes.
- 1.3. We have analyzed the purposes and goals of the site and identified different target audiences with different needs. We are exploring how best, with our limited resources, to meet those needs: whether with content of our own or with links to other sites. The site is still heavily biased towards the needs of “PYM regulars” - those attending Annual Sessions and/or doing committee work.
- 1.4. We have neither the resources nor insight to undertake a fundamental website redesign at this point.

2. Website Policy and Job Descriptions

- 2.1. There is a PYM website policy approved in 2007 that we intend to update and bring for re-approval at AS 2018. <https://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/website-policy/>
- 2.2. Draft job descriptions were developed for the Website Content Team and IT Administrator (formerly Web Coordinator) roles, both to be appointed by and report to the Communications Committee.

3. Role-based Email Addresses and Contact Form on Website

- 3.1. We are progressing towards reinstating role-based email addresses for PYM officers, committee clerks and representatives to outside groups (not MM reps). Once we have the addresses we can re-launch a **contact form** on the website.
- 3.2. A status report (which is also posted on the website) was sent to officers, clerks and PYM reps to outside organizations, describing our plans for role-based email addresses and soliciting their feedback. *We would still appreciate your feedback if you are one who has not yet responded (see [Progress report on Role-based email addresses for PYM](#))*

4. List of Meetings and Worship Groups

- 4.1. We are working on a definitive list of Meetings and Worship Groups in PYM and displaying it on the website.
- 4.2. This has required research to clarify what it means for a Meeting or Worship Group to be “in” (or “affiliated with”) PYM, how the records for that are kept, and by whom. This involves conversations with Assistant to the Clerk, Statistical Clerk and M&O Clerks.

5. Calendar

- 5.1. We are wrestling with how best to maintain a calendar of PYM and other Quaker events on the website. It is difficult to keep the list up-to-date and comprehensive enough to be useful. It is also difficult to find a display tool that meets our needs.
- 5.2. For Youth events PYM has a paid Youth Programs Coordinator who takes this on as part of her job. But for “adult” events keeping a calendar is a burden someone has to be willing to shoulder. Should PYM appoint a Calendar Clerk?

6. Secretariat - Minutes and Archives

- 6.1. The process for publishing and archiving PYM minutes from Annual Session and RepCom was neglected in the transition from paper to electronic documents. The traditional “packet of minutes and attachments” prepared by the Secretariat after each annual session was last produced in 2012 and no paper archiving has occurred since then. Currently the only “archives” since 2013 consist of about 50 to 60 individual PDFs and Word documents per year, linked on the website.
- 6.2. The Secretariat clerk (now a member of the Communications Committee) is working to assemble the documents into electronic “packets” for the years 2013-2016 (2017 already exists) and will collaborate with the Historian-Archivist to archive paper versions as well.
- 6.3. We intend to provide our Recording Clerks with more institutional support and clear, consistent processes for preparing the minutes, including attachments.

7. Directory & Collaboration Tools

- 7.1. A draft document has been developed which defines the requirements for a new and comprehensive online directory and related role-based email capabilities and directory file sharing (see link to document in addendum).
- 7.2. These requirements are pending submission to the whole committee (this month) and then to the RepCom body (March) for further review and feedback before we propose a specific project to meet these requirements.
- 7.3. We have begun work on synchronous online communication tools (Zoom, Skype, Google Docs, etc.) and asynchronous communication (Discourse and other online discussion forums, email, etc.) towards the goal of developing a specific proposal.
- 7.4. Progress has been slowed principally due to capacity constraints but also some interdependencies for this work and committee activities.

8. Policy on Technology Recommendation and Selection:

- 8.1. This policy was developed through our discernment on how different aspects of technical solutions and their providers should factor into our decision-making process, especially with regards to potentially “open source”, non-proprietary, and non-profit-focused solutions that align with or at least are not in conflict with our Quaker principles and values.
- 8.2. An initial draft was developed and published to the Committee on 2/5/18, and our goal is to discuss this at RepCom and make it available for review and feedback in March. While this policy does not require approval from the body, given the widespread engagement of the PYM community and dependency on tools and products that we may select and recommend and the importance of ensuring integrity in our decision-making, consistent with progressive Quaker principles and values, in addition to meeting the functional needs of PYM.

9. Registration Pilot Project for RepCom 2018

- 9.1. The YPC and Assistant to the Clerk created a pilot registration for this year’s RepCom using Google Forms. This online software produces a shared spreadsheet that the various planners can access.
- 9.2. Feedback so far has been that, despite a few glitches that can be fixed for next year, the system worked very well. It has relieved the local arrangements committee of having to recreate such a system (online or paper) each year and needing to gather accurate information for a meeting for

which they have limited knowledge, thus allowing them to focus on the hospitality tasks. This year's system has allowed the planners to see clearly in advance which Reps had or hadn't registered, providing enough time for the Assistant to the Clerk, Presiding Clerk, M&O Clerks, and YPC to reach out, invite and encourage the missing Reps to attend. It has allowed Alyssa as YPC to better support the JYM Committee in their travel logistics and arrangements for the planning meeting, held in conjunction with RepCom. It has also allowed us to experiment with making it easier for the Treasurer to collect needed information for travel reimbursements for the Reps and JYM Committee.

- 9.3. We recommend using this process again next year and ask the Registrars to take on the main role, with the collaboration of the Assistant to the Clerk and the YPC, the support of ComCom, and the participation of the local arrangements committee. The existing form can be easily copied and updated.

10. 2018 Annual Session Registration Project:

- 10.1. This effort concerns the intersection of requirements from the Registrar and several committees and clerks of PYM with the technical effort to build, modify, maintain and support the online application. This work is significantly under the oversight and on behalf of the Registrar(s) who helps define and navigate the requirements and scope and address operational, financial and other non-technical matters. In 2016 and 2017, this effort was quite substantial due to the need to significantly build out the complexity of the online registration process and then undergo a migration to a new technical platform.
- 10.2. The technical registration project effort has begun, and three planning sessions have already been completed. High-level information has been provided to the Registrars on the proposed 2018 approach in advance of RepCom. The draft requirements are under development with a planned publish date to RepCom of March 6.
- 10.3. Our presiding clerk has asked if the start of registration can move up, potentially to early April. After the March 15 registration meeting following RepCom, this question will be addressed in light of the feedback on the approach, scope and requirements. Additionally, options will be considered to reduce scope or otherwise facilitate an earlier launch of AS registration.

Submitted February 13, 2018 by Lawrence Alderson

Addendum

Documents/references - the following materials are available in the Communications Committee Google Docs folder:

1. This report:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Jjzbq-tuHVGM11G-yTtGazD7pfJyOVQ5Dvtnc310rU/edit?usp=sharing>
2. Draft of the Pacific Yearly Meeting Directory Requirements:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jt2PuXWak5hkmRI9NIG85Efl8RGzXxIHeaFQXzGVB9E/edit?usp=sharing>
3. Draft committee job description:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tccXwNteR4_DVMzooXcg5z-XCyDSQq5jdbx8WYVFoo/edit?usp=sharing
4. Draft Policy on Technology Recommendation and Selection:
(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MAIo--y5fMFLivDe8K66X6eHx635pJwor-xbpjteao/edit?usp=sharing>)

A note on “working groups”: The committee uses the term “working group” in lieu of the more traditional term “subcommittee”, as this reflects the way that these groups function, by necessity and design, actively involved in tasks such as writing proposals and specifications, maintaining the website and other hands-on and often technical work. The use of “working group” has been mentioned as a potential source of confusion in communications to the broader PYM community and so remains under discernment.