

NEWSLETTER SESSION MEETING NOTES
CNPS CHAPTER COUNCIL MEETING SEP 6 MEETING
TRANSCRIBED SEP 13 -- Carol Mattsson

The meeting started off with each attendee introducing herself, describing her newsletter, and describing particular issues with the newsletter and what would help them out. We were very short on time by the time the last few attendees got to speak, because we allowed discussion on the newsletter issues as they came up. We had I think only about 40 minutes for the entire meeting. We didn't have time to vote on, or summarize or comment on the relative importance of the various issues. Next I'll present my notes on some of the issues.

The attendees were about 2/3 newsletter editors, about 1/3 representatives of the newsletter editors such as chapter presidents. We had about a dozen people attending, from these chapters: Orange County; Solano Chapter (Willis Linn Jepson); Dorothy King Young Chapter (Mendocino County); Redbud, East Bay, Mt. Lassen, San Diego, and Santa Clara Valley (my) Chapters; and probably one or two more I didn't get noted down.

CNPS CLIP ART CD

Lori Hubbart provided copies of her newly created "CNPS ClipArt" CD, containing plant drawings that may be used for CNPS's non-profit use. That is, the agreement allows the images to be used in newsletters, on promotional materials, and for education, but not to be placed on items to be sold such as T-shirts or mugs. The drawings were made by several artists, and the CD contains plant names and identifies the artist for each drawing. The CD was enthusiastically received by all!

Lori cautions that part way through the process of creating the CD, she learned that gray scale images will enlarge much better than "bitmap" images, which explains why some of the images on the CD will enlarge better than others. (Gray scale equals usually 256 shades of gray describing each dot of the image, whereas "bitmap" means only one color, black or white, describing each dot of the image.)

PHOTOS IN NEWSLETTERS

Some attendees put black-and-white photos in their newsletter printed copy, but put color versions of the same photos in their online version of the newsletter.

SHARED ARTICLES REPOSITORY

I think all attendees were enthusiastic about a shared articles repository. Features suggested:

- * Ability to look up articles by subject
- * Protection of articles from public view

I think files uploaded to the Yahoo group ought to take care of

protecting the articles from public view, as long as we set up the group so that approval is needed before adding to the group, and let only members view the uploaded files.

PUBLISHING

Some small chapters find actually publishing the hardcopy newsletter to be difficult. They have trouble finding a printer (did I get that right? Were there other issues?).

Some chapters fold and mail the newsletter themselves, others have the printer fold and mail it out for them.

Maybe if one chapter found a good printer, other chapters could join to get a group rate discount on newsletter printing. However physical distance might present problems for this approach-- unless the printer also folded and mailed the newsletter.

Attendees did enjoy having local control over the newsletter (and indeed isn't the purpose of the CNPS chapter to focus on unique and local issues?).

Our chapter's considered bulk mailing a few times but turned it down each time because of the length of time it would take to deliver the newsletter compared to first class mail. However the San Diego chapter reports their bulk mail delivered newsletter usually arrives within two days.

EMAIL/ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION VS HARDCOPY

Some chapters send e-copies of the newsletter to a mailing list that includes non-members. Those chapters say "the more the merrier" or think of the non-members in the list as potential members - a "recruiting list." (Or was this a chapter news mailing list?)

Some chapters think of the hardcopy newsletter as a tangible benefit of being a member.

The DKY (Dorothy King Young(?)) chapter newsletter is very successful. Julia Lark has been the editor for sever years. She suggests (through her rep. Lori Hubbard), considering submitting newsletter articles to the local newspaper for greater publicity. Julia receives more articles than she has room to publish. Readers like the detailed and scientific nature of the articles. In fact some members have renewed specifically to continue receiving the newsletter.

Many chapters had most articles contributed by board members.

OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATING NEWS TO MEMBERSHIP - MAILING LISTS

Many editors are involved in also distributing news to members via email. Most saw a need to continue distributing the newsletter via hardcopy, both as a reward for membership as mentioned above, but because most members still prefer to receive it that way, and because

only a fraction of emails actually make it to their intended recipients (one attendee said that only 30% of the emails on her list didn't bounce, because of badly formatted or outdated email addresses).

Members are reluctant to self-sign up to be on a mailing list. (I didn't mention it at the meeting, but I've heard that our chapter has about 800 members but only 200 have signed up to be on the e-list that sends out only about 2-3 messages of chapter events per month.)

Many chapters distribute both email news and the newsletter.

One chapter presents the news online in blog format.

Some chapters mail a postcard with key events and let members get the full newsletter online (did I understand that right?)

COMPOSING/FORMATting SOFTWARE

Some attendees asked if we could reduce the cost of getting copies of publishing software by going in together on a purchase. (The company that Judy Fenerty first used to get discount copies of software for non-profits was mentioned -- I don't recall the name.)

The reason MS Word is not "good enough" as a newsletter layout tool is, software like In Design makes it easier to make the newsletter look nice.

One Chapter complained that their newsletter "looks boring," meaning it has no different font sizes for the titles or bolding to indicate emphasis.

Consider that a tool such as In Design has a learning curve, has a cost, and if the editor is replaced, the editor's replacement may need to spend a lot of time learning that tool too or may have to start the newsletter layout all over.

To aid the learning, one attendee suggested taking a class in using the tool (In Design); reading a book like "Desktop Publishing for Dummies"; and publishing & sharing hints and tips to the editors' e-list.

ADVERTISING IN NEWSLETTERS?

One chapter is considering accepting commercial advertisements in its newsletter. Other attendees weren't sure this was even allowed in the CNPS bylaws.

One chapter did thank recent donors of food, services, etc. to the chapter in their newsletter.

CONCLUSION

Arvind, we drew no conclusion at this meeting, but I think we all would like it if you helped us to create a shared article repository. For me, it was great meeting the other editors and hearing their perspective. I think all attendees enjoy creating their own unique chapter newsletters,

