

# Society for Industrial Archeology

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## Membership Report

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### Introduction

President Russo reconstituted the dormant Membership Committee during the September 2017 board meeting. It is charged with

advising the SIA Board on matters relating to membership, including member relations, new membership recruiting and member retention. All recommendations are to be submitted to the board for its approval. Recommendations are not limited to new initiatives but should re-examine existing policies and procedures as appropriate.

In 2001, members of the Board and other important figures in industrial archaeology meet on retreat to consider the state of the society and the discipline. The take-aways from the “How can we grow our membership?” discussion were:

- 1) Create a portfolio on membership for a board member
- 2) Implement a moderate targeted membership drive
- 3) Advertise and seek young people

### Our current situation

Membership hit a peak of 1,786 in 2002, probably in conjunction with the New York conference. By 2016 it had declined by 966 or 46%. On average, this has been a loss of just under 60 members per year. The Membership Committee considers this unsustainable and that the belief the “next conference will fix everything” is unrealistic.

By reference to the table below, we see that since 2002 we have lost the equivalent of the cost of almost three years’ worth of newsletters as expressed in terms of \$50 memberships:

Expenses	2014	2015	2016	3-year average	Number of \$50 memberships to sustain this 3-yr. average annual cost
HQ Staff	\$27,015.26	\$45,003.35 <sup>3</sup>	\$22,516.71	\$31,511.77	<b>630</b>
Journal <sup>1</sup>	\$28,137.96	\$9,819.75	\$31,678.47	\$23,212.06	<b>464</b>
Newsletter	\$18,626.42	\$11,048.00	\$14,102.60	\$14,592.34	<b>292</b>
Conference Coordinator <sup>2</sup>	\$6,000.00	\$10,250.00	\$12,000.00	\$9,416.67	<b>188</b>
				<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,574</b>

<sup>1</sup> Varies depending on how many journals we produce in a year (nominally two issues per year).

<sup>2</sup> Registration is supposed to generate 50% of the annual expense, but profit/loss on conferences and fall tours are variable.

<sup>3</sup> 2015 expense was particularly high, and unlikely to be repeated, due to a post-retirement healthcare contribution for Don Durfee; 2017 HQ costs are lower than past averages.

Therefore, the current activities, 'cost' on average, the dues of over 1,500 members, currently hundreds more than we have. Of course, not all members are at the \$50 level, and we have many generous individual donors each year that make that number less alarming, but unless checked and reversed, at some point the Board will have to choose which activities and membership benefits to cut and when, or find ways to increase revenues.

### **Understanding who we are**

Successful marketing to new members requires a clear understanding of the SIA's demographics, and psychographics (the type of granular detail Facebook collects). The committee is unanimous in the belief that this information is critical to deciding whether to market to profiles similar to the current membership or if it should pursue a different profile.

Attached are two analyses prepared in 2006 and 2017 by James Bouchard. They show, and anecdotal observations suggest, we are older than the general population with high concentrations in the northeast and the traditional "rust belt" states. While the Board is aware that the membership includes both professional and avocational members, we do not know the balance between the two. Likewise, members are largely of European ancestry. But a solid campaign cannot be based on anecdotes.

### **What we've tried**

Over the years the Society has tried tchotchkes, peer-to-peer recruiting, a new members' reception at the annual meeting, and travel fellowships. Some of these have been and continue to be very low-cost methods that we can continue, though their efficacy is in question. Fellowships do work and the society highly values its "fellows," the cost of conversion (to use marketing speak) is not cost effective; It takes years for us to recover the cost of a single award through dues.

Clearly, the society needs a more cost effective, deliberate, and sustained initiative.

### **Options Investigated**

#### *Marketing and branding survey*

HQ has started conversations with a marketing professor at Michigan Tech about the possibility of a class project in fall 2018. This should come at no cost to the Society. The plan is to run a preliminary survey of the membership this spring (results will be available at the annual meeting in Richmond at the end of May), and then have the student marketing society use this information to develop and administer a more thorough and targeted survey in the fall term.

#### *Google AdWords*

Every time you enter search terms, Google conducts an auction behind the scene for ads on the search results page. As of this writing, it appears that no one is bidding for many of the search terms we'd likely use (your mileage may vary), which suggests an *AdWords* campaign could be inexpensive. What we do not know, without experimentation or advice from a marketing organization, is the cost per new membership (*i.e.*, the 'cost of conversion') or the time commitment to run such a campaign.

#### *Facebook*

HQ maintains a Facebook page with about 300 followers. As recent headlines have shown, Facebook gathers extensive, sometimes "creepy," information about billions of people. Their advertising program allows us to identify and advertise to people with similar connections, interests, and behavior as our current Facebook followers. It should also be possible to identify new audiences and

do a variety of campaigns such as information and engagement. Most of Facebook's revenue comes from mobile ads which slant to a younger crowd. As with Google AdWords, we can only learn the cost of ads (though they are very modest) and their cost effectiveness by trial and error, or perhaps by retaining someone more knowledgeable with marketing (hiring a professional marketing consultant is not an inexpensive proposition).

### **Recommendations**

At the January Board meeting, the Membership Committee recommended:

- 1) it would be premature at this point to experiment with an online advertising campaign, starting with Facebook.
- 2) polling members in preparation for the development of a promotional campaign.

The Board decided to:

- 1) publish this report online and develop a questionnaire
- 2) no. 1 then resolved into conducting an online survey of the entire membership.  
[Information on how to access the survey will be sent to members with this year's ballot mailing in April. Preliminary notification will be placed in the winter *SIA*.]
- 3) authorized HQ to spend up to \$500 on
  - a. reprinting rack cards for distribution at industry-themed museums
  - b. advertising in appropriate sister societies' publications (ideally with no-cost reciprocal ads).

Further discussion will be invited and arranged at the Annual Meeting in Richmond

Respectfully submitted,

The SIA Membership Committee

Mark Brown (chair), Nanci Batchelor, James Bouchard, and Steven Walton

**Atts.:** 2006 Analysis and 4 updated charts

## **SIA Membership Analysis (2006)**

Concerns over declining and graying membership have been expressed from time to time. To really understand what is happening we have to look at the numbers. Some of this information has already been presented in other forms at board meetings. Don Durfee has specially provided some of the information. One thing to remember when comparing data from different times is that they may not really be comparable. Don's annual numbers are generally for October, which is near our year-end. Comparing October figures to May ones may give a false impression depending on when those who have not renewed are deleted and when new members join.

Since 1997 the membership increased until 2002 and has declined since then. So far this year we seem to be almost back to the 2002 numbers but we are a long way from the year-end. The decline since 2002 is not very large (8.3%) but could be worrisome if it continues.

Another consideration is the Joint membership category. This is counted as one membership but actually represents two people. Similarly, the Contributing and Sustaining may represent two people instead of one. Thus, we have more members than we think we have. We should probably look at also reporting the number of individuals especially since a conversion from joint to individual really represents the loss of one member even though they balance out in the current arrangement.

Clearly that vast majority of our members are from the USA with the next largest group from Canada then Europe. There is no real surprise here.

There are two large classes of memberships: individuals and organizations. Organizations (Institutions and Corporate) only represent 7% of our total membership and only one is corporate all the rest are institutions. Generally, institutions want the Journal as opposed to activities. The decline in institutional membership since 2002 is 20% or almost three times the individual one. The reasons are probably more tied to decreasing budgets than anything else. For now, we will concentrate on the individual members in the USA as they represent the vast majority of our members.

A Pareto plot (ordered by decreasing number in each category) of membership by state shows the 11 largest represent 68% of the US total and 18 states represent 80%. If we instead group by region, we see the Northeast represents 50% and if we add the Midwest we have 70% and by adding the south we get 80%. Thus, our membership is concentrated in the East and even there it is concentrated in 10 states. The only anomaly is California on the West Coast our third largest state in terms of members.

It would be nice to be able to do similar analysis for age; profession etc. but we do not have this information. Similarly, it would be useful to see if the concentration of our membership has shifted by state but again we do not have the information.

Figure 1: Total membership of SIA, 1997–2017



Figure 2: Total membership of SIA, 1997–2017, divided by category

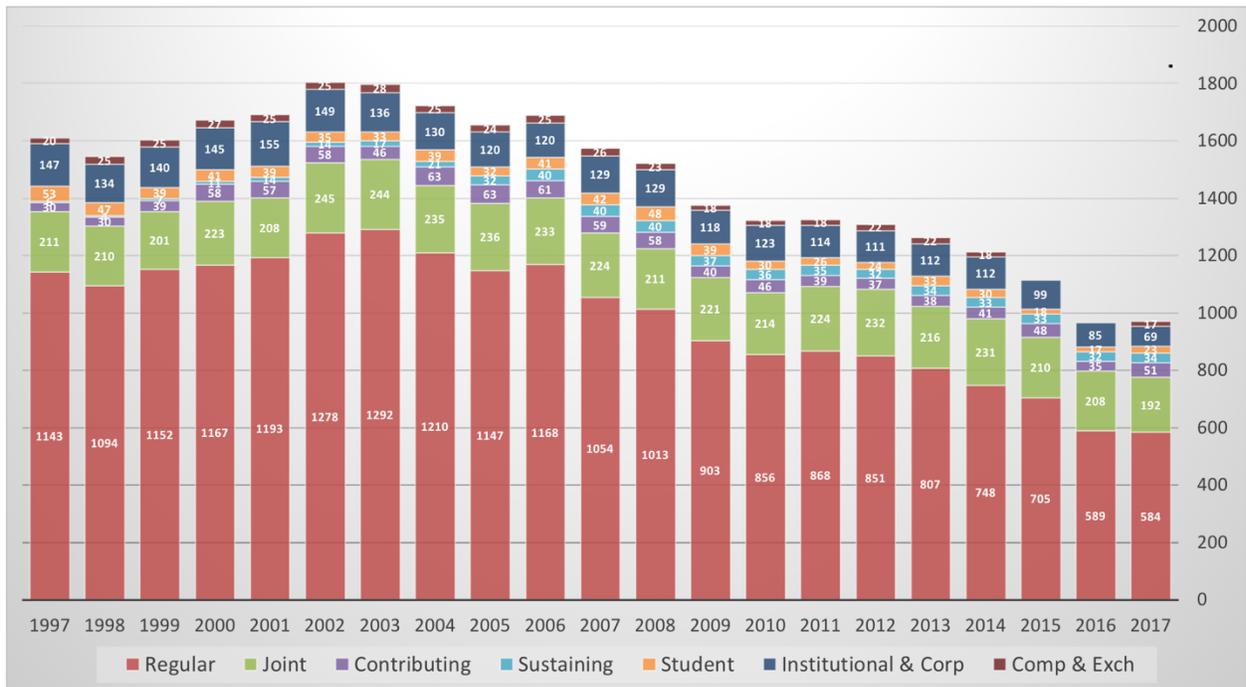


Figure 3: New members and non-renewals, 1997-2017



Figure 4: Net year-on-year change for society.

The blue line here is the net gain or loss in the given calendar year. The red line is the net change from the previous year to that year..

