



International Academy of Mediators

Report of the Communication & Outreach Committee

Christine Masters, Chair

April 14, 2021

Purpose and Evolution of the Committee:

As I understand it, the Board's original purpose in establishing the Communication and Outreach Committee (C&O) was to communicate IAM's vision and accomplishments to IAM members, potential members, and consumers of commercial mediation through social media, blogging, and, internally through Member Updates. As you may know, I first volunteered to work on Member Updates in 2016 with Lynne Bassis. I was then asked to serve as Chair of the C&O Committee when Keith Seat was our blog Editor-in Chief and Chuck Doran was handling the IAM social media. With the elevation of Chuck to Chair and Keith's departure, I agreed to continue when no one else stepped up to the plate. Richard has been a godsend; he is always willing and able to pitch in to help ensure the mission of the Committee is accomplished.

The Committee is plugging along, but I need guidance and support from the Board if we are to continue. On which of the following areas does the Board want the Committee to focus?

Member Updates

I understood that the Board saw Member Updates as providing fellows with an opportunity to stay connected and informed about what is going on with other members, both professionally and personally. It was envisioned as a simple "ask": a Committee member would email various Fellows asking them to share a personal and/or professional update of up to 150 words and to consider submitting a blog or other postings on social media. We posted many many updates over the years, but often lately, our requests go unanswered, even by Board members.

I have personally reached out to 30+ members for updates; I received one response (from new member Kelly Knight) since my last report in January. I received occasional help (usually after much pestering) from Lynne Bassis, Todd Smith, Vance Cooper, James Mang'erere, and Tat Lim (who seems to have dropped out of the Committee). The Committee has made some recent inquiries of Fellows and received several encouraging responses, but no updates have been received yet.

IAM Blog

As you know, Keith Seat stepped down as Editor in Chief in July 2019 after posting some 60+ blog entries. Since his departure, we have posted about 10+ additional articles, attempting to meet Keith's practice of posting one article per quarter. We have a few options under consideration.

Each C&O Committee member was asked and originally agreed to propose a blog idea from a list prepared by Keith and me, and then work with the author to get it in shape for posting to the

IAM Blog, there have been no submissions except from Jeff Trueman. We have asked that Board members also consider submitting an article they have written (or are even thinking about writing or even having heard about a member who might have an article). So far, we have not heard much interest, although I reach out whenever I see an article written by a Fellow and published elsewhere. Perhaps our SIR's have some articles we can post.

IAM Social Media Efforts

While updates and blogs have been the organization's primary communication and outreach tool, the IAM also established social media outlets to broaden the circle of potential readers.

Tim Corcoran regularly posts news about upcoming events on the IAM private Facebook page, although I am not positive whether he also posts on our public page. Currently we have 250 Facebook followers. Since IAM's social media accounts were set up in 2015, there have been many postings, but not a comparable level of responses. I cannot speak to our Twitter or Linked In activities, as I do not use either platform. When I accepted the role of Chair, I made it clear to Chuck that this was not my area of interest, let alone expertise, and that I would need to rely on others in this regard.

The Committee needs input from the Board and the membership to identify content to be posted on our various platforms. It would be great to have a message from the President reminding members to regularly review the IAM website, as well as to send either Richard or me any news about their practices, any articles/books they have published and a link thereto, and to respond to requests for updates.

Book Talks/Happy Hours/Webinars

These projects, while not specifically assigned to the C&O Committee, bring information and comraderie to the membership. Book Talks was a Zoom program created and hosted by Jeff Kichaven last year. After six successful programs, Book Talks went inactive in July 2020. Since then Eric and Jeff have created and hosted Happy Hours, which have been well received and attended.

So far this year, IAM has hosted several webinars, thanks to the Professional Development Group. The webinars are currently only for IAM members and mentees. As suggested in my previous report, the Board might want to consider opening them to the public. The Board might send an email encouraging members ed to contact Wendy Kramer or Logan Cooper if they have ideas for a webinar.

iCloud Library

In December Rande Sotomayor and Shel Stark contacted me about this project for which they had already obtained Board approval. Since then, we have gathered numerous forms from six members in various jurisdictions. The forms will be searchable by author, by topic and by browsing. We're expecting to have this project up and running by summer.

With the Board's approval, an email to the IAM membership from Richard will be sent shortly, explaining the project, providing a link to the core library and soliciting further contributions to the form library. With the help of Greg Derin, we have created "limited license" that permits IAM to post the forms for use and modification by our members.

Conclusion

As mentioned in my last report, I was having difficulty in activating the Committee. In response to my email on January 3, 2021 to all of the Committee members to determine their interest/commitment in continuing on the Committee, I heard from Lynne Bassis, James Mang'erere, Vance Cooper, and Todd Smith. While they all indicated their willingness to continue the C&O Committee doing updates, we have not been able to get together for a zoom meeting.

In anticipation of making this report to the Board, I sent another email recently, asking each member to contact 6 specified members. (Originally, we had divided up the membership of about 175 into groups of about 35, with each of us agreeing to contact a group. Perhaps that was too daunting of a task, so I decreased my expectations.) James recently wrote me that his mother had passed away and that he had contracted COVID. Lynne and Vance have reached out to their assigned members, but I have not yet heard from Todd.

While I consider myself the "never say never" mediator, as C&O Chair, I feel like It is time for the Board to think about the future of the Committee, its goals, and members, including a successor to the Chair. If the Board decides that the C&O Committee will continue, in its present or a modified form, at a minimum we will need a current list of members, including those recently inducted and Board guidance as to our priorities.

Christine Masters, Chair, C&O Committee