

Report of the Vice President Meetings January 31, 2004

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Update on 2004, 2005 and 2006

2004 was a successful conference with 388 attendees (down from the 460 record in NYC, but higher than any prior year) and 261 papers presented (up from 232 in NYC, but slightly lower than the record 264 at Palermo). Thanks to conference host HVR Consulting and David Exelby, and partner Powersim Software, as well as Jonathan Coyle (Conference Chair), Michael Kennedy and Graham Winch (Programme Chairs), Jack Homer (Workshop Chair), Roberta Spencer (Conference Manager), Bob Eberlein (Society President), and the many volunteers for their excellent work. Bob Eberlein also wrote a new paper submission and review system for this conference that worked very well.

The conference was also a financial success, generating a budget surplus of approximately \$90,000. The Society's objective for its annual conference is a budget surplus of \$25,000. Because of the rigid contract with the conference venue, Keble College, and the requirement for all-or-nothing attendance (no day passes and very expensive fees for those staying off-site), we felt that it would be fiscally prudent to budget for a relatively low attendance figure (approximately 330), and worst-case expense assumptions; this yielded a relatively high registration fee which seemed sure to produce the low attendance. A confluence of favorable events generated the additional \$65,000 surplus above budgeted. Approximately \$15,000 came from additional revenue from the higher attendance; approximately \$50,000 from lower expenses. About half of the reduced expenses came from a lower charge from Keble College than was contractually agreed. There were many other expense savings in the 3-5K range which resulted from sponsors or others stepping in to provide or assist with services and/or favorable breaks. Home office staff costs were above budget by approximately 23K, which indicates a need to plan for more such staff to run future conferences. The spreadsheet IncExpBudgetActualCompare2004.xls provides 2004 details for those interested in more information on expense savings (note: this spreadsheet compares actual expenses to those that should have occurred at the higher actual attendance number, and therefore is a useful guide to the source of cost savings below budgeted levels).

As a final note, the student volunteers for the 2004 conference did not receive free registrations as they have in prior years. In light of the large surplus provided by this conference to the Society, we would like to recommend that these 9 volunteers be offered free registrations at either the 2005 or 2006 conferences, with the charge to be made against the 2004 budget.

2005 is proceeding with no major problems. The registration fee has been set at \$425 for early members, and \$200 for students. While the registration fee is higher than in the past, expected total costs including airfare and meals/accommodation are reasonable.

2006 The conference will be held at Nijmegen University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, July 23-27, 2006. Executive Director Roberta Spencer visited the site last November for a preliminary review and to address several logistical concerns. As you may recall, the meeting rooms will be at the University while accommodation will be at several hotels in the city (approximately 3 kilometers from the campus), or at hotels out near the university. Neither the city centre nor university hotels have sufficient space for all participants, so participants will be dispersed. The

logistics of bookings and transportation need to be worked out. Meeting space at the university is ample; the cafeteria is open for lunch and dinner. One logistical problem may be that the hotels are booked Saturday night, so the PhD colloquium and PC meeting schedules may need to change to reflect later arrivals.

A brief update from Etienne Rouwette is available in a separate file (Preparation ISDC 2006 Nijmegen). The conference organizers have proposed that Andreas Größler from Mannheim University be the program chair for the 2006 conference. The team from Radboud University is not changed but other research groups (public administration and environmental sciences) have shown an interest in attending or participating in organization. 'Innovation' has been proposed for a conference theme and is still being discussed.

2007 Expressions of Interest and Pre-Proposals

As indicated at the July 2004 meeting, we received a pre-proposal from Luis Luna and Jorge Duran for Puebla, Mexico, and an expression of interest from Len Malczynski for Albuquerque, New Mexico (accompanied by information and proposals from several area hotels – the city convention bureau seems to be very interested in obtaining conferences and helpful in making it happen). These have been put on hold while we review an interesting proposal from John Sterman and others regarding a “50th anniversary celebration conference” (attached below). In addition to the organizers listed at the end of that proposal, I have received numerous emails supporting the concept of a 50th anniversary conference in Boston (including Andy Ford, Bob Cavana, Paal Davidson, Peter Milling, Yaman Barlas, and more). Subject to the sense of the Winter Policy Council Meeting, requests for formal proposals from the above pre-proposals will be made and a final decision on 2007 taken at the July 2005 Policy Council meeting.

2008 Expressions of Interest

As of this date, we have received expressions of interest from University of Navarra, San Sebastian, Spain (Jose Sarriegui and Jose Gonzalez). A pre-proposal is expected for discussion at the July meeting. I will also be in contact with the unsuccessful proposers for 2006 – Greece (Niko Georgantzas and Andry Argyrides), and Switzerland (Markus Schwaninger and Birgit Kopainsky) – as they indicated some interest in hosting 2008. The collection of 2008 pre-proposals will be discussed at the July policy council meeting so as to provide feedback to prospective hosts for submittal of formal proposals and decision at the July 2006 policy council meeting.

Thinking Ahead ...

By 2009, it will have been 10 years since the conference was held in Asia, Pacific-Rim. Should we look to solicit a proposal from that area? Australia might be a good location, but perhaps Hawaii or west coast US a reasonable compromise.

Fiftieth Anniversary Conference Pre-Proposal

We are rapidly approaching the 50th anniversary of the founding of the field of system dynamics. We propose to celebrate the occasion with special events at the 2007 conference of the System Dynamics Society (which coincidentally is the 25th anniversary of the International System Dynamics Conference). To maximize impact, attendance, and also the ability of key pioneers to attend, we propose to hold the conference in Boston, the birthplace of the field.

Why 2007 and why Boston? Jay Forrester published the first article on system dynamics in the Harvard Business Review in 1958. 1957 was the fruitful year in which his ideas about what was to become "industrial dynamics" and then system dynamics took shape (Note: D-memo D-0000 is dated Nov 1956, and D-0001 through 0003, all dated 1957, present what became the production-distribution model described in the 1958 HBR article). Holding the conference in 2007 and in the city where the field was founded is highly appropriate and consistent with the history of the field.

There are pragmatic reasons for 2007 and Boston as well. 2007 is the next year for which the conference is normally scheduled to be in North America. Delaying to 2008 would either take the conference to Europe, reducing the likelihood that key founders can attend, or force us out of our normal rotation between NA and Europe/Asia. At the same time, 2007 provides enough time to plan for an appropriate celebration and related activities, including a (potential) special issue of the SDR.

Boston is a good location for the conference of the society, being a major port of entry with excellent air connections to the rest of the world, and providing a wealth of academic, cultural, natural, and other attractions. We have substantial experience hosting conferences in the Boston area. The core group of organizers for the 2005 conference has agreed to organize the conference in 2007 as well, including those listed below. We propose to organize the conference in much the same way as we are doing for 2005, with changes based on what we learn from the 2005 experience. Executive Director Roberta Spencer reports that a Boston conference will minimize the load on her office, freeing up resources to organize special events to celebrate the half-century mark for our field.

Bob Eberlein
Mike Radzicki
Nelson Repenning
Khalid Saeed
John Sterman
John Morecroft