Fall 2008

Personality and Social Psychology Connections is in Development Stage

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Recommended Citation

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By Don Forsyth

When will technology, in all its varied forms both complicated and simple, begin to give back some of the minutes, hours, and days that it has stolen from us? Slogging through emails, developing online teaching materials for courses, readying a manuscript for online submission, searching for information on the web, formatting a survey so that it prints nicely, and navigating through digital libraries and journal article repositories wastes more time than a Dean's introductory remarks at a meeting of the full faculty, the paperwork required by a detailed-oriented IRB, or an eighth-year students' dissertation defense.

Seeking to counter the trend towards time plundering technology, SPSP is planning to launch an internet resource that will provide members with access to the kinds of information they need to carry out their professional work: *Personality and Social Psychology Connections (PSPC).* Designed to complement existing web sites used by personality and social psychologists, this hybrid site would be part web-based magazine, part clearinghouse for resources, part mega-page for key links in the field, and part members-only online clubhouse. (The name "connections" is just the working name, and isn't a particularly creative one at that. *Connections* is the name of the newsletter for dozens of organizations, including the NIH Institute on Aging, the American Society for Engineering Education, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Perhaps contest is needed to come up with the best new name for the planned set of web resources.)

What are the goals that SPSP wishes to accomplish by enhancing its web-based resources? Information-exchange, identity-maintenance, and logistics are central ones. PSPC will facilitate the dissemination and sharing of information about personality and social psychology with others, including colleagues, other scientists, and the lay public. The site will also create a public face for the Society and the discipline. Given that social psychology and personality science is of uneven accuracy across the web (and frequently sensationalized), a centralized, carefully edited site for personality and social psychology would provide both SPSP members and the general public with information that bears a more official imprimatur. The page will facilitate the day-to-day business activities of the society, such as collecting dues and updating members' records.

A relatively broad-based site is envisioned, one that would be of interest to members of the Society, psychologists both within and outside the academy, educators (including secondary to primary education), professionals in related and applied fields (e.g., market research, public policy, medicine and health, law, policy makers, industry and corporate, non-profits), and the public in general. Some ideas for elements to be included on the website:

Services for SPSP:
- Dues paying
- Voting
- Directory
- Alerts

Member services:
- Research/lab collaboration modules
- Social networking
- *Dialogue*
- Direct access to PSPB, PSPR, etc.
- Resource clearinghouse for teaching and research
- Wiki on social/personality psychology (or interface with Wikipedia)
- Selected topics in social psychology with links, discussion areas, etc
- News filter and RSS feed
- Commentary blogs
- K-12 pages
- News releases, resources for media
- Webinars, video downloads, podcasts, discussions of current events
- Professional announcements (Job postings, calendar of meetings)

The PSPC page would be fast to load, simple in design, but dynamic—the content should change on a regular basis, making the entry page a place individuals would visit regularly for information. Inspiration for the design of the page would be drawn from such relatively vibrant pages as Slate (*http://www.slate.com*), NPR (*http://www.npr.org/*), Arts and Letters Daily (*http://www.aldaily.com/*), and Scientific American (*http://www.sciam.com/*).

The initial planning of the site was carried out by a committee that included Don Forsyth, Brian Nosek and John Williams, but the work needed to implement the plan is only getting underway.

The committee recommended using a Content Management System (CMS) design for the pages, rather than the more common (but increasingly outdated) image and text-based hyperlinked pages, because such a system would allow far greater flexibility in content and design. The committee also suggested that PSPC would be edited by a society member, who would have duties, responsibilities, and support similar to that of a journal editor. For more information or to post a comment about this initiative, please contact Don Forsyth at *dforsyth@richmond.edu.* ∎