Minutes of the Publicity Committee

Held on Wednesday, 22 December 2004,

Room 4.03, Appleton Tower

Present:
Jon Oberlander
Don Sannella
Barbara Webb

In attendance:
Gordon Duckett
Diana Sisu

1. Apologies for Absence

Neil Brown
Roland Ibbett
Ewan Klein
Austin Tate
Stratis Viglas

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2004 and matters arising

Roland to approach relevant people in ISLI to suggest joint graduation reception. Ongoing.

[Action: RNI]

Get journalist to look at student posters submitted at Jamboree poster competition 2005. Diana has already spoken to CPA about this but CPA lukeworm (rather than enthusiastic). Use our own contacts in the media and invite journalists directly.

[Action: JO]

Postgraduate Prizes awarded during the Graduation Ceremonies must be reviewed (i.e. what we award prizes for and who sponsors them). The Committee recommended that Ewan Klein takes this action to the next MSc Board.

[Action: EK]

Work is in progress to put together information pages for staff and mechanisms for maintaining them (e.g. info retrieval from database where possible). As web pages change all the time, this action doesn't need to be recorded.

The action on revising programme of Jim Wallace visit is overtaken by events.
With regards to the Science Festival, Diana had proposed the creation of an informatics roadshow which helps explain informatics as a science to the public in an enjoyable way. An action had been placed on Diana, Alan Bundy and Gordon to find resources to implement this proposal. A grant application to the EPSRC Public Engagement funding schemes was considered but dropped due to time constraints.

Since there is constant demand for Informatics demos, not just for the Science Festival but other roadshows/events such as SciFun, Transkills, GoforIT, etc, the Committee decided to apply for an EPSRC Partnerships for Public Awareness Awards. There is no deadline for grants under £20k while the deadline for larger grants is likely to be May 2005. An appropriate PI for such a grant would be Stratis.

Jon, Barbara, Stratis and Diana should meet towards end of January to discuss this further.

[Action JO, BW, SV, DS]

Action on Diana and Stephen to meet and try to resurect/update demos/materials created by STG some time ago. Various people have tried to meet with Stephen. Demos/materials, if they exist, must be physically searched for in store rooms at JCMB.

[Action DS]

Action on Barbara to invite Isobel Stevenson to attend future meetings of the Committee. This action is overtaken by events. Isobel now attends our Undergraduate Recruitment Committee.

Action on Barbara to investigate if the 'Kodak' prize for the best 4th year project web page will be available this year. The Publicity C'ttee will underwrite the prize if a sponsor will not be found.

[Action BW]

Action on Neil, Gordon and Diana to work on information structure and maintenance mechanisms for the web site. Overtaken by events.

2. Events: their benefits to the School (and lines of responsibility)

The School has a number of annual events of its own and also takes part in wider University/City events such as the Science Festival, the Council's GoforIT events, etc. Events should have a measurable outcome in terms of publicising the School's research and improved undergraduate recruitment. Responsibility for these events should be taken either by Publicity Officer or Schools Recruitment/Liaison, depending upon which of the two objectives above is the overriding one. Thus University Open Days and UCAS Visiting days fall under Schools Recruitment/Liaison while events like the Science Festival is the responsibility of the Publicity Officer. Each event should be discussed in advance and responsibility delegated as appropriate.

The Committee is invited to make suggestions for improvements to these events in terms of content and format bearing in mind the above objectives.

- Judy or what is it like to be a robot, 11 March 2005. The Publicity Committee provisionally assumed responsibility for this event.
- Science Festival, 1-5 April 2005 (Machine Learning). The Publicity Committee assumed responsibility for this event. It was suggested by the Research Committee that the School themes each year's events and that Institutes take turns in showcasing their
research. The advantage of having a theme for the events is that it forces the School to think about ways in which we can present each aspect of informatics (as opposed to taking the easy way out and use crowd pleasers like robotics each time); the disadvantage of showcasing a theme each year is that it could mislead the public into thinking that the School is only doing research in one area. Care must be taken when choosing demos to illustrate a theme. Thus, ANC will provide our entry for the 2005 Science Festival under the theme 'Machine Learning'. Jon and Diana are currently working with Chris Williams to get the demos ready and any development work will be paid for from the publicity budget.

- Jamboree (incl Milner Lecture), 25 - 26 April 2005. The Committee proposed having one other public lecture, maybe as a debate on 'what is the future of informatics' or 'e-research'.
- IJCAI event for Schools, 1-5 August 2005. This event belongs to Schools Recruitment/Liaison with Stratis Viglas in charge. Diana and Stratis had agreed provisionally that the same demo used in the Science Festival and the AIBOs would constitute our entry for this event. Action on Diana to contact Andrew Tuson and Stratis to start working on displays, staffing, etc.

[Action DS]

Jon will investigate what science fiction movies will be released in 2005 to enable us to respond to any queries from the media/CPA and contribute to public understanding of science.

[Action JO]

Action on Gordon Duckett to pass to the Committee information and contacts about the ‘knowledge city’ Council scheme, which sponsors public understanding of science.

[Action GRD]

2-3 Colloquia, date to be announced. These are research events and they should be assessed by the Research Committee, which had suggested the Colloquia are also themed. Action JO to take the Colloquia back to the Res C’ttee for further discussion and proposals for speakers.

[Action JO]

Conferences. There are at least 5 major conferences held in Edinburgh this year. Action on Diana to mail academic staff to ask them about any forthcoming conferences and list them on our conferences page.

[Action DS]

3. Publicity theme (to be seen in events)

The Committee decided to set each year’s research scheme in advance and that the best time scale for doing this is mid-February each year and any demo development should take place over the summer.

4. Web site

The University is planning a major restructuring of its web site which will have an impact on School web sites (incl publishing/maintenance mechanisms). A report from the team of consultants should have been available at this meeting but it wasn’t! Since Informatics has invested a lot of money and time in improving its web ranking, it is crucial that we maintain it, hence the University’s web ranking must improve. Also, if content and maintenance
mechanisms become centralised, appropriate technologies must be used.

Action on Mike to raise this issue with appropriate people at central level, e.g. Grahame Bullfield, Helen Hayes, CPA.

[Action MPF]

5. Undergraduate recruitment

Publicity Committee members should read the minutes of the newly created Undergraduate Recruitment Committee. The new committee focuses on undergraduate recruitment; postgraduate recruitment remains the responsibility of Publicity C'ttee and the Graduate School.

6. Format of Publicity C'ttee meetings

Jon proposed that the Publicity C'ttee meets at the beginning of each semester and a week after the end of block 4. In addition to larger meetings, the Committee should meet in small groups, as relevant for each event. These light-weight meetings will be treated as any formal meeting i.e. they will be minuted.

7. AOB: postgraduate recruitment

Don Sannella proposed that the Publicity Committee provides publicity materials and funding for our current postgraduate students to do a series of talks when they visit their home countries, particularly if they come from countries which the International Office regards as prime postgraduate recruitment targets. Action on Diana to liaise with the International Office to investigate possible funding schemes and advertise them to our current postgraduate students towards the end of each semester.

[Action DS]

Don also commented that we need a better list of mailing lists/newsgroups where our courses should be advertised. Staff/students should be asked to suggest mailing lists.

[Action DS]