

UCGIS Communications Committee Report UCGIS Annual Symposium 2015

This annual report briefly reviews activities carried out by the Communications Committee for the period of September 2014 through May 2015 before the 2015 annual symposium in Washington DC.

Recap of Recent Committee Activities

Chen Xu, University of Wyoming, is in the 9th month of his first term as chair of the committee. Xu's term will run from September 2014 to October 2017. Committee members from last term included Tony Giarrusso from Georgia Tech University, Danniell Goldberg from Texas A&M University, Diansheng Guo from University of South Carolina, Stephen Hirtle from University of Pittsburgh, Jun Li from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Chuanrong Zhang from University of Connecticut. Xu hasn't had opportunity to talk to previous members yet about their intentions to continue serving as members. Forming a new committee should be one major task for the upcoming symposium.

So far, Xu has been working with UCGIS Executive Director Diana Sinton and President Steven Prager on forming new communication plans for better serving the information needs of the organization and promoting communication connections with external organizations, platforms and etc. Several ideas have been discussed but no concrete plan has been made yet. Some of the ideas are based on the surveys done by the previous Communication Committee lead by Donna Genzmer from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Here is a list of several experiments we have done to inform future communications activities. Xu tested VIVO, an open-source research-focused discovery platform from Cornell University for its capacity as an academic social networking tool that could link UCGIS members. Xu deployed a Drupal-based platform on Amazon EC2 as a testbed for testing new technologies and developing new functions before they are transferred to the official UCGIS site. Using this testbed we experimented with new functions such as for blogging and integrating social media (e.g., Twitter and Facebook). After a successful beta run on the testbed, the blog function has been transferred to the office website.

We also made several improvements to the webpages, which include the UCGIS Officers, Board and Chairs page and the Organization Members page. Qin Han, a PhD student at George Mason University, has made significant and valuable efforts to help design and develop the webpages. He has expertise in webpage development and his continuing contribution to the UCGIS website development can help make improvements to the website. With his assistance, we effectively responded to occasional requests on adding new content to or updating information on the website.

Xu considers the development of a holistic communication plan for the organization as his current top priority task over the next 6 months. The envisioned

communication strategy should achieve several goals: 1) facilitating information exchanging among organization members, 2) establishing communication channels with peer organizations, and 3) broadcasting organizational activities and geographic information science knowledge to the public.

2015 Symposium Agenda Items

During the 2015 annual symposium, Xu intends to recruit new members to the committee. Also, he would like to solicit input on the aforementioned communication plan. The goal would be to identify actionable items that would eventually lead to the development of the communication plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Chen Xu
Chair, UCGIS Communications Committee
May 20, 2015