

Report of the Meeting of the IAI Communications Task Force
April 15-16, 1999 – Miami – USA

The following participants were present at the meeting: Bárbara Garea, Cuba (Chair), Carlos Ereño, (Newsletter Editor), Eduardo Banús (IAI/GEF/WMO), Armando Rabuffetti (IAI) and Marcella Ohira Schwarz (IAI).

General Assessment:

The Task Force evaluated the actions undertaken by the IAI and the achievements obtained since June 1997 to April 1999, as a result of the information and communications activities addressed by the Communications Task Force. The recommendations implemented by the Communications Task Force were based on those agreed with the Executive Council.

The Task Force assessed the contribution in communications and information through the following issues:

- Promote the “marketing” of the IAI
- Assert IAI’s image and prestige in the Americas and in the world
- Promote advances in the understanding of Global Change and its impact
- Foster collaboration in research
- Provide information to policy and decision-makers.

The Task Force attempted to identify effective mechanisms to strengthen the most pressing issues in communications and information, in the short and medium term, and as a result some actions were taken regarding:

- Improvements in the Newsletter content, format, and design, in accordance with its approved budget and the recommendations of the Newsletter Editorial Board
- An independent IAI Homepage, which will be managed and updated by the Directorate. The homepage will have a direct connection with the Newsletter
- Two IAI Annual Reports were published, and the third one, corresponding to 98-99 is being prepared
- IAI brochures, infosheets, and scientific workshop reports organized and supported by the IAI were published
- The Agreement of Montevideo was published in four languages
- A set of high quality transparencies were produced and distributed to all member countries representatives, which will allow to increase the marketing and dissemination of the IAI
- The recommendation to have a Communications Officer at the IAI Directorate

Finally, the Task Force considered that all its initial tasks and mandate were addressed, and overall the Task Force was able to recommend and follow up on a number of issues, which contributed to strengthening and improving basic mechanisms to disseminate IAI’s activities.

Nevertheless, it is still necessary to:

- Design an IAI long-term strategy on communications
- Implement mechanisms to assess the real impact of the information generated and distributed

Therefore, it is recommended:

- The Task Force on Communications continues its work for one more year and addresses the issues mentioned above, as well as follows up on the current activities and cooperate with the IAI Communications Officer in the implementation of communications tasks at the Directorate
- In order to reduce the costs of the meetings, the communications Task Force agreed to hold its future meetings together with the meetings of the EC and CoP, as much as possible

The Task Force also recommended the following actions:

Annual Report:

1. In order to reduce the costs of the annual report, the Directorate would investigate the possibility of editing and publishing the Annual Report in Brazil. The Directorate will also consider the possibility of having some editorial assistance from specialized companies in Canada or in the USA
2. The Directorate will attempt very hard to have the next Annual Report published by December of 1999

Homepage:

1. The Directorate will update and improve the IAI homepage and will establish a direct link with the IAI Newsletter
2. The Data Information System (DIS) Coordinator will meet with Carlos Ereño and Horacio Arevalo to work on the necessary mechanisms to improve the homepage's format and to include the Newsletter content in the IAI homepage (set up an on-line form to sign up and a direct link to communicate with the Newsletter Editor's office)
3. The IAI homepage address should be included in the main search sites in the Internet (Example: yahoo, altavista, etc.);
4. The IAI homepage should include links with other homepages, for example: IAI supported research projects, and other global change research organizations;
5. The IAI homepage will include the Newsletter survey and will set up an automatic on-line answering system
6. The Communications Task Force requested all members of the Directorate staff (Director, Scientific Officer, Project Officer, Communications Officer and DIS Coordinator) to help in maintaining the homepage updated

Newsletter:

1. The Editor of the IAI Newsletter will carry out a readers' survey in issue 19 of the Newsletter to find out the readers' opinion about the Newsletter content, design, format, etc, in order to improve it. The readers will also be asked about how they prefer to receive it (by E-mail, homepage or by regular mail). The Editor believes that we could cut down on the Newsletter costs, if we can reduce the publication and mailing costs.
2. The chair of the Communications Task Force, Bárbara Garea, will send a communication to the members of the Executive Council asking them to respond to the Newsletter survey and to contribute with the IAI Newsletter by sending information and articles (example: global change national programs, etc.) to the Editor, whenever possible
3. The Task Force considered appropriate the Editor's proposal of editing three issues/numbers of the Newsletter (36 to 48 pages each) instead of four, because of the lack of information and the delay in obtaining it. The budget for three numbers would be approximately the same as of four, because the larger number of pages of each issue would compensate the fewer number of issues. Nevertheless, the number of Newsletter publications per year would be adjusted according to the needs of the IAI. In the future, it might be necessary to publish a special issue of the Newsletter with information on scientific publications and results of IAI supported projects
4. The Task Force considered opportune to include the IAI Communications Officer in the Newsletter Editorial Board. The Task Force also acknowledged the contributions of the members of the Editorial Board. The chair of the Task Force and the Editor of the Newsletter will send a communication to the board members thanking them for their contributions to the Newsletter and requesting their further support in continuing to improve the IAI Newsletter
5. The Newsletter has improved as a result of the modifications implemented based on the recommendations of the Task Force

Other Aspects:

1. The Task Force recommended that the Directorate establishes a classification system for IAI publications and informational material
2. The Task Force recommended that the IAI Scientific Officer continues working with the PI's of IAI supported projects to obtain the scientific reports resulting of these projects to be included in a future publication of IAI