

**University of Minnesota Retirees Association
Annual Report from the UMRA Communications and Outreach Committee 2020-2021
June 30, 2021
Report by Jean Kinsey**

In the academic year of 2019-2020, this committee met twice: 10/25/2019 and 3/6/2020.

The committee's central **mission** is to raise UMRA's visibility and to make UMRA a recognizable and respected organization within the University community.

The committee's charge as outlined in the UMRA Operating Manual

Major functions: The committee's central mission is to raise UMRA's visibility and to make UMRA a recognizable and respected organization within the University community. The committee oversees the Newsletter's editorial team and the website team; solicits and creates articles about the activities of UMRA members; helps place UMRA-related information on websites and in electronic publications of other U of M units; supports the Membership Committee in its development and dissemination of the UMRA brochure and in its work with the U of M Office of Human Resources to promote UMRA to prospective retirees; works with collegiate Resource Responsibility Centers to distribute UMRA information in collegiate publications; and fosters interaction with U of M organizations such as OLLI, URVC, UMAA, and the U of M Foundation to encourage mention of UMRA in their print and electronic literature.

Activities:

During this pandemic year when all our meetings were on Zoom – virtual meetings – we managed to expand the communications and outreach more than ever. Notable advances are:

1. Set up an UMRA Facebook group (with the help of Gary Engstrand).
2. Rejuvenated the *Journal of Opinions, Interests and Essays, JOIE*.
Will Craig instigated this activity; a new editor was found in Kristine Bettin.
By June of 2021, there are 5 new articles published in the journal.
3. The history and impact of the PDRG program was researched by Will Craig. It included interviews with many former grantees; several articles were published from the writeup Will provided. *JOIE* carried the full report. Articles emanating from this report appeared in the U of M Alumni Magazine, AROHE Newsletter, P&A Senate News, U of M *Brief*. UMRA's name was seen in many new prominent places.
4. Changes continue to be made to the eNewsletter and new features were added to the UMRA Newsletter such as short interviews with members and feature articles about some members' activities.
5. Paper Newsletters continue to be sent to those who request it; toward the end of the year the editor started to send paper copies to all new members for the first year after retirement.
6. The Newsletter Editor, Kris Mortensen, took on the role of managing the production of three virtual (Zoom) events a month, organizing rehearsals and sending out multiple notices to remind members to register and to tune in.

7. A team of members made up of Virgil Larsen, John Anderson, and Cathy Gierke developed the expertise to run the zoom events and webinars saving UMRA several dollars by not having to hire professional U of M IT personnel.
8. Some of our programs have been sent to and accepted by “Gold Mine” a section of the University of Minnesota Alumni website that supplies recordings and videos of events at the U of M. These can be accessed by the public. All of our recorded programs are recorded and place on the UMRA website for members to view anytime. They can send a link to these programs to their friends if they wish. The C&O Committee recommends that we send all program presentations to “Gold Mine” subject to permission from the presenter.

The **Newsletter and the Web site** (<https://umra.umn.edu/>) continue to be the primary means of communication with our members. The newsletter production (8 per year) has been refined and is working well with 2 paid editors (newsletter editor, Kris Mortensen and production editor, Sadie Brendalen). There is ongoing discussion about how to integrate the printed version of the Newsletter with the web site. The Web Master, Cathy Geirke, suggests there is a continuum of ways to place the news on the web site and that eNews could be more efficiently utilized. Discussion continues about whether to continue to print a newsletter at all. One of the concerns is that the printed version provides an archive of UMRA activities. However, there is precedent for other electronic newsletters to be archived; this decision will be debated in the future.

Website Monitoring

The following committee members have been assigned to review the following parts of the web page on a quarterly basis or oftener if they are so moved. They will provide feedback to Cathy Gierke, Webmaster.

- Home - Jean Kinsey
- Events - Claudia Parliament
- Member Benefits - John Anderson
- Serving U - Will Craig
- Newsletters - Becky Anderson
- Governance - Ron Montross
- Member Login - Jeanne Markell

Cathy Gierke reports that this activity has been a big help in finding little glitches and making design suggestions.

Committee interfaces:

The C&O Committee interfaces with the Membership Committee (their chair is a member of the C&O Committee) a there are many mutual efforts and missions. The chair of the C&O committee is part oof the Organizational Continuity Committee.

Committee Members: Jean Kinsey, Chair; Kris Mortensen, John Anderson, Becky Anderson, Will Craig, Claudia Parliament, Ron Matross, Jeanne Markell, Cathy Gierke Ginny Hanson
 Guests: Jan Morlock, Gary Engstrand

Copies of the reports of the 3 meetings held in 2020-2021 are attached.
 Report written by Jean Kinsey

**Report from the UMRA Communications and Outreach Committee ZOOM meeting
October 6, 2020
Report by Jean Kinsey**

Committee Members present: Jean Kinsey, Chair; Kris Mortensen, John Anderson, Becky Anderson, Will Craig, Claudia Parliament, Ron Matross, Jeanne Markell, Cathy Gierke

Absent: Ginny Hanson Guests: Jan Morlock, Gary Engstrand

1. We heard from Gary Engstrand who had volunteered to set up and monitor an UMRA Facebook Group. He sent a suggested set of rules for this Facebook Group (below). The committee passed a motion that we recommend to the Executive Committee that we give this a try and that it should be open to all U of M retirees.

In anticipation of approval, Gary will start to set up some of the infrastructure for this Facebook Group.

2. We reviewed the notes from the May 20, 2020 meeting to see if we have met our goals from that meeting.
Reminder... The committee's central **mission** is to raise UMRA's visibility and to make UMRA a recognizable and respected organization within the University community.
 - a. OHR still does not send out our Newsletter to all retirees for the first 2 years of retirement. But, there are new efforts to gain access to the list of retirees' names; we will continue to work towards increased communication with all retirees.
 - b. Hot links have been added to the letter inviting new retirees to join UMRA. John Anderson shared that letter with us via Screen Share!
 - c. There will be a new member reception via Zoom on October 27. It was suggested that all members receive an invitation to attend. (John A.)
 - d. Encore is no longer holding their information event. (Kris)
 - e. The suggested outreach activities promised by Will Craig, have been completed with GREAT SUCCESS. UMRA now has a formal arrangement with the Alumni Association and articles in their magazine as well as an AROHE publication regarding our PRDG program. Will has gone above and beyond the call of duty to accomplish this and we owe him a very big THANK YOU. (See below a copy of his report.)
 - f. As discussed in May and requested by the Executive Committee we all volunteered to take on the task on monitoring (proof reading) parts of the web page and provide feedback to Cathy Gierke if and when we find items that should be "fixed." Cathy and Jean will be parsing out appropriate web page sections and assign them to the various committee members.
3. Cathy Gierke sent information about how to enhance the texts and visual appeal of items on the web. Some have been incorporated by Kris. More are available.
 - a. We do not have tracking capabilities built into our web page.

- b. Next year the web page will be revised with the new Druple format as demanded by the U of M. This would be a good time to make any major changes in design.
- 4. Both Cathy and Kris talked about potential changes to the online Newsletter. Cathy suggested that the length of articles need not be so restricted on the web as they are in the Newsletter format. Kris suggested that with so many new events a monthly newsletter might evolve into a vehicle that provides news and events information on a more frequent basis.
 - a. We may want to expand the list of VIP recipients of the hard copy Newsletter. John Anderson will provide the names U of M persons who currently receive the hard copy to Kris.
 - b. We talked about the ongoing need for backup personnel to both Cathy and Kris. One name was suggested for editorial help. Kris will follow up.

Jan Morlock expressed a BIG THANK YOU to Kris and Cathy for all their work this past season. Kris also extended a special thank you to Julie Medberry for her excellent editorial help. We all extend our Thank You to these hard workers.

- 5. Recruiting and retaining members: John Anderson talked about the new members Zoom welcoming meeting on October 27, 10:30 a.m. He circulated the Survey form used to solicit the activity interests of members; it was suggested that the survey be sent to all members, not just new members.
- 6. The Zoom educational group started by Virgil Larson was discussed. Several of us missed the initial meeting and sign up. John Anderson will send that information so we can join as we will.
- 7. The idea of “Encouraging 100 Flowers to Bloom” was discussed in terms of who should monitor/approve new events/activities. If they are to be promoted, invited, or approved as an UMRA activity, this committee recommends that the Executive Committee (probably the President elect) be the clearing house. They meet regularly, they have the best picture of the totality of our activities and calendar.

Addendum:

Facebook Group: Gary Engstrand

If the Committee endorses the idea of an UMRA Facebook page, it will also need to agree on a set of rules (so that the administrator of the page--presumably me--has direction on removing posts or people). The rules we set for my high school page seem equally applicable here:

No partisan political posts, no posts on religion, no sales solicitations. There could be one exception to the ban on political posts: political news reports about actions that affect the University (e.g., an MPR report that a legislative committee proposes to cut the University's appropriation by x million dollars or a Strib article about a proposal to reduce funding for MSRS or a legislative investigation of a U lab or department).

Any other rules that should be in place?

I'm informed it is possible to pose questions to people who ask to join the page. We could do that. Such as "what was your affiliation with the University?" As I wrote earlier, we'll need to decide if the page is only open to UMRA members or to any retiree. Spouses/partners? We obviously don't have the ability to determine if someone is really a U retiree, so we'd have to accept people's word for it (if we allow folks who are not UMRA members).

My inclination would be to allow it to be open to all self-identified retirees. That might open the door to people becoming UMRA members, and it's easy enough to delete inappropriate posts--and people--if someone misbehaves.

Will Craig's Report:

Here are 2 Communication/Outreach items I've been working on.

1. My newsletter article on PDGR is being picked up by [AROHE](#) and will appear in their November newsletter. This is the first time an UMRA article has appeared there.

2. I have written an article about UMRA for the [Minnesota Alumni](#) Magazine. The editor, Kelly O'Hara Dyer, is quite happy with my article as submitted. Their next issue is focusing on history around the U. My article presents information about UMRA member contributions of money and volunteer time, but is centered on the how retirees have documented and contributed to the history of the U -- e.g. Josie Johnson's book, Prell's *Campus Divided*, the UMTYMP program.

**Notes from the UMRA Communications and Outreach Committee ZOOM meeting:
March 4, 2021
Report by Jean Kinsey**

Committee Members present: Jean Kinsey, Chair; Kris Mortensen, John Anderson, Becky Anderson, Will Craig, Claudia Parliament, Ron Matross, Jeanne Markell, Cathy Gierke, Ginny Hanson

Guests: Jan Morlock, Frank Cerra

1. Review accomplishments since the October 2020 meeting.
 - Facebook group established – Gary Engstrand
 - Alumni Association and other outreach - Will Craig
 - JOIE rejuvenation – Kris Bettin
 - Multiple email announcements for events – Kris Mortensen
 - Developed a team with expertise to run Zoom meetings – Virgil Larsen, John Anderson, Cathy Gierke

Jeanne M. reported that when recruiting for new board members, she was asked about how many paid staff UMRA has. When she was told none, the potential nominee was astounded because of the quality of the programming and operation UMRA presents. This “made our day.”

2. Web site discussion:

When the transition to Drupal 9 occurs will be the optimum time to make any desired design changes. There are some UMRA members with Drupal experience that may be willing to help with this transition.

There is a newly developed web page for new committees/interest groups to guide them in using the web page for communication with members. It accompanies the form with which to apply for a new interest group.

Action: As committee members we will review sections of the Website in March in order to give Cathy feedback on any discrepancies we find or suggestions for improvement. The list of assignments for each committee member is reiterated here. Please try to do this review in March; provide feedback to Cathy and copy me.

Sections of the Web site for each to review carefully:

Home - Jean Kinsey and Ginny Hanson

Events - Claudia Parliament

Member Benefits – Will Craig*

Serving U – John Anderson*

Newsletters - Becky Anderson

Governance - Ron Montross

Member Login - Jeanne Markell

* I switched these two around so that no one is reviewing pages they also developed. If there is any objection to this, just switch it back.

3. **Action:** Communicating with members and others with multiple media is a good thing. To this end we recommend that we post our events on our Facebook group page with a link to

our web site for registration. A person who might be responsible for this posting was suggested and will be contacted by Kris M.

4. We suggest that doing new member receptions quarterly is a good idea.

Action: The next one will likely be in April.

We reviewed the survey of interests conducted at the time of these receptions and suggested that a question differentiating between interest in attending monthly forums and workshops and planning monthly forums and workshops be added to the survey.

Ways to speed up the time between new members joining and getting their names on appropriate list serves and email lists was discussed. Discrepancies in the number of members between Cathy's data base and John's list serve and Virgil's member list will be identified by those parties.

Action: With the loss of our office in McNamara during construction, it was suggested that we (Kris) contact U of M mailing services to hold UMRA mail in some central place so that correspondence is not lost.

5. **Action:** Kris M. suggested that we send a printed newsletter to all new members for the first year of their membership. A motion was made, seconded and approved to go ahead with this.
Newsletters a produced 8 months of the year.
Records of newsletter circulation and eNews recipients and participants at Forums, Workshops and A.M. events provided by Kris M. There has been anywhere from 61 to 151 participants in our virtual events. We consider this good attendance.
6. We each expressed our opinion about whether we should continue virtual presentations after COVID-19 and we will likely go back to in person meetings at Coffman. A consensus is that we should continue to make our programs available online – Webinars or Zoom even after we have in person meetings. An important distinction was made between live streaming of events and after-the-fact webinar or other online availability. Live streaming (even if possible) would likely cannibalize live attendance and cut our in-person attendance below what we need to make room rentals and food service affordable.
7. Zoom may continue to be a good method for committee meetings and small groups. Several are very comfortable with Zoom.

May 20, 2021

To: UMRA Board of Directors, Members of the Communications and Outreach Committee
From: Jean Kinsey, Chair of Communications and Outreach Committee

Re: Notes on May 20, 2021 meeting of the C&O Committee

1. At the request of President Frank Cerra, this committee discussed suggestions for an UMRA Policy regarding reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses incurred by UMRA member volunteers. These suggestions are compiled in a separate document.
2. Cathy Geirke reported that 2 new members have expressed interest in helping with web work. Maureen Smith will be working with the URVC website. Michael Austin has asked for a “test” copy of the UMRA website so he can look for design opportunities and help with the 2022 conversion to Druple 9.

Cathy and others identified activities that help drive traffic to the web site and help to deliver information to members and others.

- UMRA E-news
- UMRA FaceBook
- *UMN Events (Jan pursuing this)
- Monthly membership emails to new retirees
- *In the Signature on official UMRA emails – a suggestion for all active UMRA members and committee chairs is to put the umra.umn.edu in their email signatures when doing UMRA business.
- *Encourage UMRA Liaisons and Representatives to other organization to include in their signatures a link to the umra.umn.edu
- Forum invitations
- *Emails to our listserv [UMRA Members]
- Google/other Search is a big way people find us (although not a push communication)
- UMRA stationary
- *Brief
- Brochures
- *Send notices about PDGR grants to colleges or departments about retirees from their area who get grants.
- **Videos on Gold Mind

From Will Craig: MAIN GOLD MIND PAGE VIEWS since 7/1/20: 7,857 views (5,491 unique views)

UMRA FILTER PAGE: 271 views (192 unique views)

Of the 25 videos, the top three most popular from UMRA

[How Not to Sound Old](#) (85 views)

[Transforming the Culture of MPD](#) (63 views)

[Rethinking Age](#) (53 views)

In comparison, the most popular video on Gold Mind as of now is Behind the Scenes at the Bell Museum, with 244 views.

* Indicates suggestions for addition ways to highlight access to the website. Cathy Gierke will help set up a template, or help individuals create a second signature in their email that can be used for official UMRA emails.

**Discussion on making our recorded videos (presentations) available more widely to the public. They would also push our name and organizational recognition.

The videos that are on Gold Mind have the permission of presenters to become public beyond UMRA members. Gold Mind is definitely publicly searchable. For example, if you go to Google, and search for "Minneapolis Megamurder" (including the quotes) you find umnalumni.org page for this video of ours.

3. **Question for consideration:** Do we want to change future videos to be searchable publicly with the permission of presenters? They would be on the widely available YouTube/Google search engines.

4. Interface of the Newsletter and the website.

Now, we have the eNews, Newsletter articles on the website (in brief along the righthand side of the home page) AND on separate pages linked to the eNews, and the PDF version of the printed Newsletter in color. There was considerable discussion about reformatting the versions on the website with a view to streamline the production work and/or a view to maximize the users' efficiency and access. It appears that the PDF Newsletter (also printed and mailed version) is the core of the news distributed on the website.

Kris Mortenson has explored the format of the *Brief* learning that without a printed copy they have a way to archive the *Brief* newsletter so it can be accessed and searched in the future. This led to a further discussion about how to present the UMRA News in a more efficient manner consistent with what the users need.

Kris M. sent reports the number of users of the zoom presentations, sponsors, and eNews. Cathy G. suggests we need to find someone with statistical skills to track the usage of various parts of the website.

We asked each member of the committee present how they access information about UMRA. This anecdotal evidence from the members of the committee suggests that there is a lot of use of the printed/PDF Newsletter. Also, PUSH emails about events, eNews, and email reminders about postings on Facebook play a major role in individual's access to UMRA News. It emphasizes the importance of keeping "UMRA" in front people's face and provide programming that entices them to look for more.

5. Cathy reported that having C&O committee members review various pages on the web and report any glitches to her is very useful and that we should keep on doing it.
6. Will Craig reported that there are 5 new articles in JOIE and that it is up and productive once again.
7. Suggestions about additional things we could do to further our outreach to the community:
 - *We could make our news production its own web page.
 - *We should work to get our news linked to other organization's newsletters or magazines i.e. UM Alumni news, newsletters of departments and colleges.
 - *When there is PDRG grant, be sure the news gets to the grantee's department and college.

Note: The number of communication and outreach channels that UMRA has now compared to two years ago is commendable and remarkable. The trajectory is good!