

Notes from the Meeting of the Awards Committee, Athens, 20th July 2008

Present

Jim Lyneis (Chair)
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Main Issues for the Awards Committee to Consider

(Derived from the briefing note prepared by Khalid Saeed)

Various new awards have appeared and there seems every likelihood that more will appear. This generated two main issues for the Society: whether/how to implement quality control; how to recognise awards

1) Whether/How to Implement Quality Control

The following points were agreed:-

- i) Any award going out under the SDS's name implies approval by the Society and therefore needs some form of quality assurance if the Society's reputation was not to be put at risk.
- ii) One additional aspect of the need to consider (1) is that accepting external sponsorship of awards requires an awareness on the part of SDS that the sponsor will be looking for an element of advertising – and that SDS's name will inevitably be part of that advertising. There was no objection to this notion in principle and agreement that it could and should be good for SDS too. However, that consideration lead on to the view that such an arrangement was acceptable if and only if:-
 - The award winners were of good quality
 - A fair and clear group had been drawn on to select the award
 - There was sustainable funding for the award from the sponsor

This lead to the following points being agreed.

- iii) There should be NO increase in 'Society Awards'; these should remain as the JWF, the Dana Meadows and the Applications awards and their special status acknowledged in all arrangements for other awards.
- iv) Even though the new awards are not 'Society awards', they are relevant to the Society and its interests.
- v) Quality assurance of further awards CANNOT be achieved by the Awards Committee's taking on the burden of reading work to assess or approve awards; there is a cost attached to such effort.
- vi) Instead the principle of subsidiarity should hold; we should seek to push downwards the actual selection, on the basis that any grouping in the Society that wishes to offer an award should be able to field a list of people who the Awards Committee felt able to make the assessment. We should therefore use the National Chapters and the SIG groupings to create selection panels made up of three people who serve 3-5 year terms.

- vii) Those panels would be selected/approved by the Awards Committee. To minimise potential offence, the suggestion was that five names of those willing to act in this capacity might be put forward and the Awards Committee would choose three.
- viii) The Barry Richmond Award is an anomaly, in that it has no obvious Chapter/SIG grouping to call on. We should explore 'locating' that award in the Education SIG.
- ix) As part of the guidelines for the various panels we should circulate the 'Statement of what constitutes good SD' which is being developed by other Society officers.
- x) Chapter/SIGs should be encouraged NOT to make an award every year. In other words, a clear signal should be made that it is quite acceptable not to make an award every year and, in fact, that this is much to be preferred over the alternative of rewarding borderline work.
- xi) There should be a requirement that external sponsorship would endure. No Chapter/SIG should make arrangements for any award that would not, in principle, be awarded for less than five years. This could be implemented by the lodging of monies with the SDS centrally.
- xii) It was acknowledged that historically the SDS has had a rather 'loose' organisational feel to it and that some members would bridle at the above arrangements, perhaps seeing them as restrictive and interfering. The Awards Committee acknowledged the need to implement these ideas with sensitivity and with clear explanation of its decisions in a manner which limits hostile reaction. However, the view was that centralised co-ordination was appropriate; it acknowledges the risk to the Society's reputation - and is perhaps an indication that SDS is maturing as an organisation.

2) How to Recognise Awards

The discussion on this topic was eased by the notion that the actions listed above would ensure that non-Society awards were of high quality. Nevertheless, a balance was needed between the acceptance of the status of the Society awards and the wish to encourage good work using the new awards.

There was agreement on the following points concerning the appropriate way of recognising non-Society awards, i.e. Chapter/SIG awards:-

- xiii) Citation in the Society Newsletter is appropriate.
- xiv) There should be NO presentations or 'ceremonies' at plenary sessions of ISD conferences.
- xv) SIG awards might be presented in a low-key way at an appropriate parallel stream within a conference. The argument was that such streams will arise naturally or can be arranged.
- xvi) The presenting of Chapter awards at conference streams should be discouraged because this was a motor for the balkanisation of the conferences (one of whose chief aims is to promote international communication). Chapter meetings in their respective home countries would be the appropriate venue for such awards. The observation was made that a national Chapter without an annual meeting of some type might not be ready to manage a process of award giving and might not receive Awards Committee approval.
- xvii) Announcement of Chapter/SIG awards at a plenary session at the annual ISD conference is appropriate. This should be separate from the Society Awards so as to emphasise the special status of these – but without deprecating the significance of the Chapter/SIG awards.