

**Society for Risk Analysis (SRA) Annual Meeting  
Risk Communication Specialty Group (RCSG) meeting  
Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center, Room 203A  
San Antonio, Texas**

*Draft Minutes*

*Secretary: Ann Bostrom, University of Washington*

Lori Severtson (University of Wisconsin-Madison), current Chair of the RCSG, opened the meeting.

Adam Finkel, Specialty Group Liaison from the SRA Council, spoke briefly:

- (1) Kara Morgan is taking over as the new Specialty Group Liaison from the Council;
- (2) Council wants each Specialty Group to appoint a volunteer to join the Workshops and Conferences Committee.

In response to a question about funds allocated to the RCSG from the Council, Adam stated that Student Paper Competition award money would be maintained in its current amount (\$500 per Specialty Group). There is some question, however, about funding Specialty Group mixers at future SRA meeting. The Council will discuss this issue at its meeting tomorrow night. It appears that the lunchtime Specialty Group meeting experiment seems to have worked out pretty well.

Adam encouraged the RCSG to make our views known, to ensure that the Council doesn't take back funding for mixers (if that is what we prefer).

RCSG members are invited to present other funding ideas to the Council. Funds are available for new initiatives.

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Lori passed around a sign-in sheet. She encouraged those present to join the group by checking the RCSG box on the registration form. One needs to be an official member to be on the RCSG listserv.

There is another listserv, created by Michaela Zint at the University of Michigan, which was started a few years after the RCSG. E-mail [risk-com@listserv.itd.umich.edu](mailto:risk-com@listserv.itd.umich.edu) to join.

Lori acknowledged members of the RCSG Executive Committee:

- **Incoming Chair** Tee Guidotti – Chair and Professor of occupational health at George Washington.
- **Secretary-Treasurer** Ann Bostrom, Associate Dean for Research and Associate Professor of Public Affairs at the University of Washington.

- Chris Clarke (Cornell University) is the **RCSG Student Representative** and an outgoing member of the Executive Council. He reported that the RCSG website has recently been updated.

Outgoing Board Members:

- Victoria Freedman from NASA
- Brooke Rogers from Kings College
- Theresa Garvin from the University of Alberta

Continuing Board Members

- Louie Rivers from the National Science Foundation
- Meredith Gore from Michigan State University

\*\* There are a variety of risk communication-themed symposia and sessions at this year's Annual Meeting. Lori noted that speakers can post their PowerPoint or paper on the SRA conference website (optional) \*\*

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**First order of business – Elect three board members**

*Robyn Wilson.* She is an Assistant Professor in the School of Natural Resources, Ohio State University

*Timothy Wilson* (a lawyer for Babst Calland Clements & Zomnir in Pittsburgh). He commented that he is acutely aware of the need to help scientists better connect with the public on issues of risk.

*Joe Arvai.* He is Associate Professor of Environmental Science and Policy at Michigan State University, as well as a principle investigator at Decision Research in Eugene, Oregon.

\*\* All voted in by acclamation \*\*

**Incoming Chair - Nominations requested.**

Cindy Jardine. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Rural Economy at the University of Alberta. She is celebrating ten years of service to the SRA. Voted in by acclamation.

### Student representative to RCSG Executive Committee:

Chris Clarke suggested that web upkeep be kept part of the student rep job. Chris will help the new representative if necessary. He also nominated Janet Yang from Cornell University. Janet is interested in health and environmental communication issues and was voted in by acclamation.

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Lori noted that 216 people are currently signed up as members of the RCSG. She also invited everyone to attend the RCSG mixer tomorrow evening at 5:30 pm, as well as the poster session Monday evening. Many posters will highlight risk communication issues.

### Student Paper Competition Winners:

Lori acknowledged Bob Griffin (Marquette University) and his work with coordinating the Competition. Three judges rated each submission via a double-blind process. Bob regrets that he can't be at SRA this week.

#### Judges include:

- Dominic Brossard (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Kurt Neuwirth (University of Cincinnati)
- Bob O'Connor (NSF)
- Katherine Rowan (George Mason University)
- Craig Trumbo (Colorado State University)

The judges considered this set of papers to be the best in the history of the Competition. Seven papers were submitted, with one clear winner and two others tied for second place. The RCSG will give two merit awards for the runners-up. This has never before been done.

First of the merit awards went to **Philip (Sol) Hart** from Cornell University (co-authors: Eric Nisbet and James Shanahan, Cornell and Fairfield University respectively). Paper titled: *Value of participation: The role of environmental values and media use in promoting citizen engagement in promoting wildlife management process*. The judges were especially impressed by the theoretical and practical implications of this paper, as well as the quality of the literature review and the statistical analyses.

The second of the merit awards went to **Justin Lessman** from Kansas State (not present). Paper titled: *Framing risk: Differences in cross-national news coverage of North Korea nuclear tests*. This paper included a content analysis of 290 articles in top newspapers in (several) countries. Well done overall.

\*\* Jeff Lewis of Exxon Mobil presented the Exxon-Mobil (1<sup>st</sup> place) award to **Rachel Hirsch** (University of Western Ontario, with co-author Jamie Baxter of the same

affiliation). Paper titled: “*The look of the lawn: Pesticide policy preference and risk perception*”. The paper involved a multistage random cluster survey of residents in two cities. The judges found it theoretically and methodologically sound and quite an easy read. It’s an outstanding two-city comparison.

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### **Additional Announcements**

A risk communication workshop will be offered by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAH), in Spanish, at the World Congress in Guadalajara in June. Location: Valencia, Spain.

2008 SRA Annual Meeting – 7-10 December 2008, Boston, MA.

**Bob O’Connor (NSF)**. This is the last year of the Human & Social Dynamics (HSD) competition (with \$30-40 million in available funds). Last year’s success rate was about 28% and NSF was able to fund just about anything it wanted. Interdisciplinary research is highly stressed. One component of HSD is decision risk and uncertainty. Email Bob if you have questions.

NSF was able to “pay down” mortgages for the Decision Making, Risk and Uncertainty (DRU) program. Decision science tends to receive more proposals than the risk side. Due dates - - January 18<sup>th</sup> and August 18<sup>th</sup>.

Two types of funding levels for HSD - \$750,000 for three years (total), or \$1.25 million for three years (total). Proposal due date in February.

**Christie Drew** (National Institutes of Health Sciences – NIHS)) NIHS recently released a Request for Information, with a January 19th, 2008 due date. The Request focuses on programs with research, outreach and participatory methodologies. More information available at: <http://www.nihs.nih.gov>.

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### **Remarks by Tee Guidotti, Incoming RSCG Chair**

Tee remarked that assessment is the intellectual core of the risk analysis field, but that risk communication is an essential practical skill. If we can’t communicate we’re no good.

In the past the RSCG has sponsored the Student Paper Competition and we are proud of all the student awardees. RSCG reviews abstracts for the Annual Meeting and has a website (<http://www.sra.org/rcsg>). There is a lot that we could be doing, however.

Tee is interested in getting the RSCG Executive Committee’s opinion on additional activities, including: additional workshops, free-standing meetings, enhancing website

content and developing a casebook of best practices on risk communication. Delighted that Kara will be Liaison to the SRA Council. Tee noted that work to be done on the RCSG bylaws - some sort of manual or guide that describes how the Group functions. He is also interested in a proposal to establish a code of ethics for risk communication.

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\*\* Those present were urged to think about symposia for next year – joint symposia with other societies, as well as interdisciplinary or topic-related symposia. \*\*

\*\* The Secretariat reported that the RCSG has \$6,276.16 in its coffers as of the beginning of the meeting. \*\*

**Meeting adjourned.**