2014 Annual General Meeting: Publicity & Public Relations Project Committee Report

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To properly respond to the most urgent needs raised during the EMBnet workshop held in Valencia in May 2013[1], the Publicity & Public Relations Project Committee (P&PR PC) established two task-forces: i) a website task-force, comprising Rafael Jimenez and Cesar Bonavides-Martinez; and ii) a communication strategy task-force, comprising Vicky Schneider and Rubina Kalra.

An overview of activities and achievements was given by the PC Chair, and discussed during the EMBnet 2014 workshop[2] held in Lyon, 30 May. The programme also included a "Website hands-on" by Rafael Jimenez on "How to use the EMBnet website, add and manage content" aiming to expose members to some of its basic functions and services, and to practise their use.

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1   journal.embnet.org/index.php/embnetjournal/article/view/693/981
2   www.embnet.org/agm/2014/programme

This article describes the achievements of the P&PR PC since June 2013, and plans for the next year.

Committee's Composition
Chair: Domenica D'Elia
Members: Rafael Jimenez and Cesar Bonavides-Martinez *(EMBnet website)*
Vicky Schneider and Rubina Kalra *(EMBnet & EMBnet.journal branding & communication strategies)*

Committee's Activities and Achievements from June 2013 to May 2014
The P&PR PC agreed to have quarterly Virtual Meetings (VMs). Additional VMs were held according to task-specific needs. The P&PR PC regularly attended the Operational Board (OB) meetings and supported the Executive Board (EB) by working on the following tasks:
1. website development, management and content moderation;
2. *EMBnet.digest* releases;
3. EMBnet and *EMBnet.journal* branding and communication strategies;
4. public relationships with EMBnet communities and related networks/societies;
5. EMBnet Sponsorship Policy and Sponsorship management.

1. Web site development, management and content moderation
New developments and achievements include:
a. individual and organisational subscriptions for membership and fee payment:
   ° the "Join Us" section of the website was revised and updated to provide clear information on different membership options;
   ° the submission procedures were revised again from January-February 2014 to improve the tracing system for payments, and to make the procedure more easy-to-use.
Thanks to these modifications, membership renewals and submission of new subscriptions can be easily managed and processed through the website.
b. Structural re-organisation of the "Contact us" section through the inclusion of both a general enquiry form and task-specific forms for queries related to membership, organisation, events, training, projects and sponsorship;
c. development and implementation of the "EMBnet AGM 2014" website section.

New proposals are:

d. the creation of a website portal dedicated to Education & Training (ET), preferably linked to GOBLET[3] and including:

  ° ET initiatives, schools and courses active across EMBnet Nodes;

  ° programmes of research and student exchange active across EMBnet Nodes and affiliated societies and networks;

  ° internship demands and offers;

e. the creation of a website section for building project proposals. This section could include:

  ° announcements of project proposals demanding specific expertise;

  ° a register of specialists available for projects demanding specific expertise.

2. EMBnet and EMBnet.journal branding & communication

Branding & Design are prime ways for EMBnet to differentiate itself from its competitors. EMBnet branding strategy should consist of a plan that uses a unique set of design tools created for EMBnet, and applied to every communication vehicle to convey EMBnet (brand) identity. These tools include colour palette, typefaces, format, images and language. EMBnet has some of these elements in place. Indeed, in recent years, since the development of the new website, the P&PR PC already renewed the EMBnet branding by adopting a new colour palette, by developing a new logo and new templates for EMBnet presentations, brochures and leaflets (D'Elia D, 2013). However, the plan of the P&PR PC was to redefine and implement, during 2014-2015, new core elements, including also EMBnet.journal, in order to improve the perception of EMBnet in the scientific community. Publicity material, such as EMBnet brochures, leaflets, presentation templates, etc., should be created by following the new EMBnet Branding & Design strategy.

Our initial steps involved reviewing the existing EMBnet design brief and mapping any aspects that needed immediate revision versus more radical aspects that might require a complete re-design of the brand. Vicky Schneider and Rubina Kalra drafted a document, which was distributed in January 2014 to the OB and to *EMBnet.journal*'s Executive Editorial Board (ENJ EB) for feedback. A snapshot of the main outcomes of this consultation process is illustrated in Figure 1.
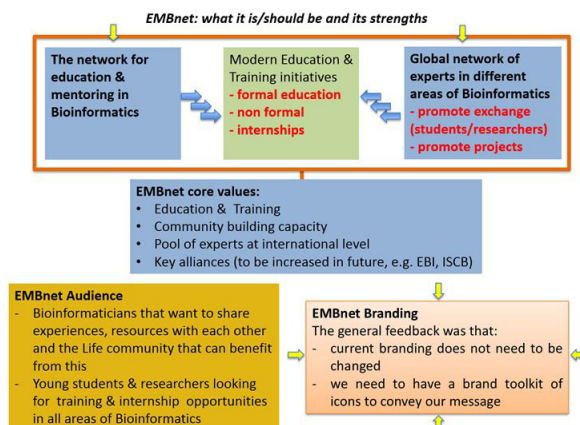
3   mygoblet.org

Figure 1. Summary of the most significant outcomes of the P&PR PC survey to outline a new branding & design strategy.

The major core values of EMBnet were considered to be in bioinformatics education and training, and in its networking and capacity building. To build on these strengths, it will be important to:

- develop modern education and training initiatives, and reinforce our alliances with other societies and networks proficient in the field;
- promote new initiatives, including new projects, and student and researcher exchange programmes.

The main actions are to:

a. develop and implement EMBnet education and exchange programmes;

b. establish an annual EMBnet Conference to be held jointly with the AGM, and possibly in collaboration with other affiliated societies, such as ISCB;

c. promote common projects;

d. deliver more tools and Web services;

e. publish more papers and education-related articles in EMBnet.journal;

f. produce more QuickGuides and online courses;

g. provide well-maintained services useful for teaching and well-documented training exercises;

h. promote membership subscriptions.

The points above were discussed during the EMBnet workshop and AGM, alongside proposals from the P&PR PC. A detailed report has been published in this volume by the Chair of the EB (Attwood, 2014). Realising these objectives will depend on substantial and consistent collaboration from EMBnet members, including contri-

butions to the website (*i.e.*, by publishing news of newly developed tools and services, new research achievements, publications and events organised across Nodes), to the *EMBnet.digest*, *EMBnet.journal* and *EMBnet QuickGuides*, and to the promotion of EMBnet and EMBnet initiatives at local levels.

As for *EMBnet.journal*, the P&PR PC has contributed in the:

a. revision of the journal Section policies;
b. rebranding of the journal Focus and Scope;
c. reshaping of the website;
d. revision of the Authors Guidelines;
e. production of a first draft proposal of the Journal's Advertisement policy and a Journal Media kit (Rubina Kalra).

A detailed report was provided by Lubos Klucar during the EMBnet workshop in Lyon.

3. Public relationships with EMBnet communities and related networks/societies

During this last year the P&PR PC has:

a. assisted members by providing support as and when requested;
b. managed and answered contacts' requests posted on the website;
c. managed the production and dissemination of EMBnet.digest and of EMBnet.journal;
d. managed sponsorships of large conferences: i.e., 2013 RECOMB-CG (Lyon, FR), NETTAB 2013 (Venice, IT), 2014 SAGS (South African Genetics Society) and SASBi (South African Society for BioinformaticsSAGS-SASBi) Conference, Kwalata Game Reserve (ZA); NETTAB 2014 (Turin, IT);
e. produced publicity material, such as a new poster and leaflet;
f. received and managed, in collaboration with the OB, the evaluation of collaboration requests from affiliated societies and networks or EMBnet Nodes;

g. contributed to the organisation of the 2014 AGM.

4. EMBnet Sponsorship Policy

A draft proposal of the 'EMBnet Sponsorship Policy' was submitted by the P&PR PC for OB evaluation in January 2014. A slightly revised version of the document was approved in March 2014. The 'EMBnet Sponsorship Policy' is available from the website in the *Contact us* section at: http://www.embnet.org/contact_form/sponsorship.

Acknowledgements

References

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Attwood TK (2014) EMBnet, the Global Bioinformatics Network: a report on the workshop and 26th AGM, Lyon, May 2014. *EMBnet.journal* **20**:e786. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.14806/ej.19.1.705