An Undergraduate Journal for Neuroscience

IMPULSE and Social Networking: Extending the Global Reach


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Introduction

The online, neuroscience journal for undergraduates, IMPULSE, was created in 2003 (Soc. Neur. Abs. 29:23.5) to fill a need for research in scientific publishing and peer review. It now has seven archived issues (http://impulse.appstate.edu and see abstracts 2004, Soc. Neur. Abs. 30:204; 2005, 31:20.19; 2006, 32:26.1; 2007, 33:26.13; 2008, 34:224.9; 2009, 35:22.9; 2010, 36:24.5). While primary research expectations of undergraduate pre-graduate, post-secondary school) education programs have increased, work completed by undergraduates is still usually not published or compiled into a study submitted by the mentor. Furthermore, undergraduate students may not be exposed to the peer review process, an important component of scientific publishing. Of wider potential interest to neuroscience educators is the opportunity IMPULSE offers to teach scientific writing and editing through Reviewer Training Sites (RTS). The current report highlights the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to try to engage more students in this enterprise.

A challenge for the journal has been extending the reviewing opportunity to more students around the world. Currently, the international review team comprises students from over 15 universities, but most are in the US and affiliated with Reviewer Training Sites, where they receive formal training on the process. All but one of these sites (University of the Free State, SA) is also in the US. In order to address this issue, IMPULSE has created a new position in the Publicity Editorial staff, Social Networking Editor. This individual is tasked with maintaining the Facebook presence, using a new Twitter account, and exploring other options to increase the visibility of IMPULSE for non-US, and particularly non-Anglophone, neuroscience, pre-graduate students. One of the major problems in recruiting more international participation is the intensification of higher level education embedded in research is essential.”

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The traditional, course-based approach to science education is even more evident in other regions. In India, recognition of the need for change is addressed in a report from India’s National Science Academy and Academy of Sciences, which states that “leading postgraduate teaching Universities and IEs should be encouraged to impart undergraduate science education...it is clear that both in terms of numbers and quality, a vast expansion and intensification of higher level education embedded in research is essential.” Part of the IMPULSE mission is to help students around the world engage in primary research reporting and reviewing, and the social networking tools available today are being harnessed to make that happen.

Using Facebook and Twitter to Foster Connections

The new Publicity Editor for Social Media has the responsibility of keeping the Facebook page updated with announcements. This serves as a means both to keep current reviewers aware of deadlines, such as manuscript reviews, and to share information on upcoming meetings and events. In the context of outreach, however, it serves the additional purpose of advertising IMPULSE as an opportunity for new students to join and become reviewers. Four new, international reviewers have joined IMPULSE through this mechanism. Currently, the Facebook group has 108 members and 14 likes, while the Twitter page has 7 followers.

Use of Google Analytics to Track Visibility

Website activity over a similar three week period in the fall of 2008 and 2011. Visits grew by 93%, with average time on the site increasing by ~20 sec., although page views and percent of new visits decreased. The exact role of social media in these changes can only be inferred.

History of IMPULSE


2005 Moved to publishing: IMPULSE at 2nd SYNAPSE and NIN (Soc. Neur. Abs. 34:224.9). Publicity Editors created; ISSN # request completed.

2007 IMPULSE at 3rd SYNAPSE, 1st IBER World Congress of Neuroscience in Melbourne, Australia, and NIN (Soc. Neur. Abs. 35:22.9). B. Goodlett became 3rd EiC. IMPULSE invited to join Directory of Open Access Journals; 2nd RTS at Middlebury College with Dr. K. Croizte.


2009 IMPULSE at 5th SYNAPSE and NIN (Soc. Neur. Abs. 37:22.3). Dr. S. Switney (U, South Carolina) stepped in as 3rd FA, Dr. S. Symington joined as FA for 4th RTS at Salve Regina Univ. Website moved to Appstate hosting: http://impulse.appstate.edu.

2010 IMPULSE presented at 6th SYNAPSE and 7th FENS Forum in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. K. McCollum became 5th EIC. Dr. K. Crisp joined as FA for 5th RTS. St. Olaf College. Dr. V. Turgeman as FA at 6th RTS. Furman Univ. Dr. S. Smith as FA at 7th RTS. Univ of the Free State (South Africa).

2011 IMPULSE presented at 6th SYNAPSE and 5th FENS Forum in Florence, Italy; Kate Darlton is 6th EIC. Social media Publicity Editor created.

Site hosted at The Honors College at Appalachian State University

http://impulse.appstate.edu

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