



INSPIRING TRAVEL
THROUGH RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM

Greetings SATW members,

It's been a busy winter for SATW, full of changes and challenges, opportunities and new horizons. And, of course, we've got a brand new website to tout — more on that in a minute. Meanwhile, here's a recap of what has transpired over the last few months:



In November our former Membership Coordinator Jocelyn Padilla left the Kellen Company to take a more traditional marketing job and pursue a career based on her degree. Becky Gilbert filled in on membership on an interim basis and, late January, Anna McManus stepped into the position, working from Kellen's New York City office. She'll be overseeing the application process, member renewals, re-qualification and an assortment of other duties (she has also been working closely with Anietra Hamper on final preparations for our website launch).

Executive Director Marla Schragger was closely involved in preparations for three back-to-back events in New York City January 23-25: The one-day Editor's Council meeting, TravMedia's IMM networking event, and our booth at the New York Times Travel Show. TravMedia's sponsorship of Editor's Council (along with GoPro and South Carolina Tourism) worked out very favorably for the council, helping to keep costs modest for attendees. Marla's attendance at IMM resulted in a surfeit of new member applications,

and SATW's valued presence at the New York Times show was coordinated by Past President Lillian Africano. It was a busy, but very satisfying week for us.

A big change the Board voted on, to pro-rate first-year member dues, took a bit longer to implement than anticipated. But renewal processes have been completed, listings sent off for the print directory, and the roster of members on our Facebook page has been updated. I am proud to share that today, SATW's membership renewal and new member numbers are at their highest level in at least five years.

As you know, a membership survey was conducted in February. We had a terrific response to the survey — about 50 percent of our membership — and the results are now being compiled by Kellen and President-Elect Jane Wooldridge. They will be presented at the Board of Directors' Midyear Board Meeting, taking place March 17-19 in Montreal, and soon after we'll share them with the membership. I think the results will reinforce some long-held assumptions about who we are, but will also reveal some interesting new perspectives on what our members expect from their dues and our conventions. Combined, this will help set plans for the next couple years. Special thanks to Jane for leading the charge on this project.

The Midyear Board Meeting is one of two times annually that the Board sits down face-to-face to discuss our operation and management, re-set goals and priorities, and address challenges on a range of topics. The agenda for the meeting will be posted in a matter of days, and I urge you to contact your council and/or chapter representative to share your thoughts on any topic that is of concern to you.

Now, the website. I know the debut of this project has taken longer than anticipated, but I think you'll be satisfied with the end product. I'd like to thank the beta testers who helped identify issues to resolve, and those who provided suggestions on how we could make the website more useful. It will come as no surprise that our beta tester-in-chief was our Secretary, Gary Arndt, and his quest for our website's speed and efficiency as well as robust, accurate content has helped keep this train moving forward. Thank you, Gary!

Keep in mind, our website must serve two distinct audiences: One is our members, of course, and back-end functions tied to your profile have been enhanced and streamlined. The other audience is non-members, and this includes prospective joiners, convention destinations and sponsors. This is the public face of SATW, and you will see a number of features introduced and fine-tuned over the coming months designed to help boost the Society's profile. Please note, as we shine a bright new spotlight on the website, send your questions, suggestions and praise to Anietra Hamper, who will be collecting member feedback to make adjustments as needed.

Stay tuned for an announcement in the days to come of professional development

webinars, along with videos posted of PD sessions conducted in Barbados.

I think we can all breathe a bit of a sigh of relief that a challenging winter is behind us, metaphorically and otherwise, and the spring promises renewal and growth for the Society. I'll be back in touch soon after the Midyear Board Meeting.

With best wishes,

David Swanson
President, SATW



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