

Third Age Network Idea Exchange

Topic: Speakers

May 31, 2022

In attendance:

Cathy Spark, Nancy Christie (TAN); John Weatherburn, Susan Schwartz, Sandra Linton, Mandy Thomson, Mary Pat Moore (AALTO), Rosemary Fyfe, Janet Hogarth (BVALL), Deborah Woods, Sandy Thurston (TAB), Michael Wosnick, Mary Baxter (TALYR), Joyce Dalrymple (LL Mississauga), Donna Pogue, Denise Bradden (LL Niagara), Ingrid McLeod-Dick, Colleen Robinson (GTLII)

Cathy started off the meeting with a brief PowerPoint highlighting the issues that were raised by TAN members regarding speakers:

Sources: Program Committees, word of mouth, LinkedIn, TAN Speakers List, commercial organizations, partnerships, university faculties, Ted Talks. 'Catchment' for speakers has changed during the pandemic, drawing from further afield without travel costs, thanks to Zoom.

Selection: Topics vs Speakers? Quality control?

Reimbursement: Honorariums vs Fixed Fees, or nothing? Most pay < \$500. Expenses?

Follow up: Survey frequency and questions? How is feedback shared?

Break out room discussions focused on the following questions:

- How do you handle it if the speaker has a preference for online?
- How do you stay fresh?
- Have you considered collaboration with other TAN groups such as sharing the cost of a speaker; should Program Chairs meet regularly – maybe twice yearly?
- What is your wish list regarding speakers?
- If you change roles annually, how do you transition committees?

Highlights of the Discussion

- Many groups are still struggling with what to do in the fall: with transitions to some version of hybrid; with finding volunteers. Some audiences are indicating a preference to staying online
- The value and expertise of Program or Talks committees was acknowledged, including the need for a succession plan, and clear terms of reference regarding roles and transition processes that are based on good documentation of programming processes
- Many groups ran a winter series for the first time during the pandemic, and most seem to be planning to continue with a winter series on Zoom

- Most groups seem to prioritize finding good speakers rather than recruiting to topics, but both are important to stay fresh:
 - Balancing programming between light and serious
 - Recognizing that some speakers will stay online, and this is valuable as back-up as well in bad weather
 - It's sometimes important to negotiate with speakers to freshen up an already 'canned' presentation
 - Peer learning programs can be a rich source of speakers who have developed programs; also a different model of reimbursement related to their own membership
- All groups are concerned with finding and assessing the quality of speakers. Thornhill indicated that they only look at speakers once a video of the speaker is vetted, and all groups talked about doing 'due diligence' in the initial connection with speakers
- There was lots of interest in collaboration:
 - sharing information about what groups are doing, and how to make it easily accessible (this was also discussed during strategic planning, and will be revisited in a future idea exchange about competition)
 - Using program committee meetings for sharing of ideas and to help orient new committees (twice yearly)
 - How can we share red flags about speakers without creating any liability – it's the kind of information that could be shared informally in a program chairs meeting
- The TAN Speaker's list is clearly valuable, and there was consensus that it should include the contact information for an individual in the group that has recommended the speaker. It would also be helpful if there was some information about quality. It was noted that the Speaker list dates quickly.
 - It was also noted that the peer-learning programs could post the many speakers they use on the TAN Speaker List