

Social Issues in Management (SIM) Division
Five-Year Review
2015

*Submitted to Division & Interest Group Review Committee
and Board of Governors, Academy of Management*

Review Team

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Analysis and Reflection on Member Survey Results

More than two-thirds of the 450 members responding to our survey have been members of the SIM Division for 7 years or less; the majority of these, for 3 years or less. The nature of the response rate seems reflective of a general trend within the Division: doctoral students and junior faculty are energetic and involved, but as SIMians reach mid-career stage, their involvement with the Division fades. Perhaps this is similar to trends in AOM overall. The annual meeting can serve to develop PhD students and provide them opportunities to present papers and find jobs, and it can help junior faculty with publication skills and network building, but once faculty are tenured, the payoffs to involvement in the Division's network becomes less obvious. Thus, the main realization from this survey is that while our junior members are happy with the Division and its offerings, if we wish to retain them past mid-career, we need to find more ways to add value beyond the doctoral program and pre-tenure years.

There is much that we are doing well as a Division. Perhaps owing to the growing concern across society and within AOM about the social implications of business, more and more AOM members are joining SIM Division. While AOM membership has declined slightly over the last 5 years, SIM Division membership has increased a bit. Much of our new membership has come through international growth. SIM Division's international membership grew at twice the rate of AOM's international membership growth. Our international members have made their presence felt, also. Over the last five years, the rate of international members serving as reviewers has come to meet and exceed that of US members.

Overall, the 450 responding members were happy with nearly every aspect of SIM Division. About half indicated that they come to the meeting every year. Those who do not come every year cite financial and timing reasons overwhelmingly for missing the meeting; very few (18 total) reported lack of interest in attending. Dissatisfaction rates with any aspect of the annual program were generally below 2%. Perceptions of the quality of reviews, which has been poor in the past, have improved substantially, with only 6.65% indicating that they were not satisfied. Only 3 respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the newsletter, only 2 felt that the elections were not fair and open, and only 1 was not satisfied with the responsiveness of division officers to member concerns. SIM Division members, as many respondents noted, do sometimes have an inferiority complex, yet only 1 respondent deemed the quality of SIM scholarship to be of very low quality as compared to other divisions, while 94% deemed it to be of average, higher, or very high quality. In sum, only 3 respondents said that they were not satisfied with their membership in SIM Division; 99% were at least somewhat satisfied, with 84% indicating that they are satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied. More than 3 out of 4 respondents would definitely recommend SIM to a colleague, so there is much to be proud of.

Observations for Improvement

SIM Division cannot be all things to all people, but there are several things that we can improve upon so that we can serve our membership more thoroughly. In general, SIM needs to broaden the participation of its membership and the suite of services it offers.

We need more mentoring, networking, and community building beyond the annual meeting. During the Professional Development Workshops, we offer speed mentoring, and it proves quite popular, as do our doctoral student and junior faculty workshops. But many of our members are the sole or one of few social issues scholars at their institutions and so could benefit from ongoing mentoring and networking. This could also help keep our mid-career and senior members more engaged.

We need a more dynamic website. We revamped our website a few years ago. We also recently created a Webmaster position and updated our Constitution to place the Webmaster on the Executive Committee, serving a three-year renewable elected office. Despite formalizing a much more central role for a Webmaster, our website content remains significantly out of date and does not adequately serve Division needs. If we cannot find a SIM Division member interested in serving well as Webmaster, we will need to consult with AOM or perhaps outsource. The Webmaster needs to coordinate with the Secretary as well, so that we can develop richer archives online, for sake of continuity.

SIM Division leadership has been described as “cliquey”. This seems less a valid criticism nowadays. We increased involvement in recent years through personal outreach efforts, particularly to international members. We also expanded the duties of our Representatives at Large, giving them more involvement in the Division’s operations. But it is important to develop more non-elected volunteer opportunities for members, so that they form a connection with the Division and hopefully become more willing to serve in elected leadership posts in future years. The leadership track is long, at 5 years, and the duties, especially the program chair year, are substantial. Such a long and substantive commitment can be a hard sell for volunteers, particularly if they have not already built a connection with the Division.

In recent months, we developed a presence on major social media; specifically, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Several members had asked for this. Though there was some initial excitement, and a few hundred joined in, involvement has quickly faded. This fits with the survey results; respondents did not rate social media as a particularly important pursuit. However, depending upon our ability to update and adapt our website, we may need to turn to social media to develop member networking and discussion capabilities.

We need to find a good format for the plenary and publicize it in ways that better reach the membership. About half of the survey respondents indicated that they did not know about the plenary. We have run it only twice; in 2013 and 2014. We’ve had a somewhat small turnout each time.

Revisiting the Action Plan for 2010

The 2010 plan contained the following planned actions:

1. Continue re-evaluation of domain statement and division name. We did not rename the Division, as members are largely satisfied with being known as SIMians. However, we did revise the domain statement. We created a sub-committee that surveyed the membership, formulated a draft, and reported to the SIM Governance Committee in August 2014. The SIM Governance Committee approved and then submitted this revised domain statement to the Academy’s DIG review committee, which approved it in late December 2014. We are now in the process of submitting this revision to our membership for a vote.
2. Review the bylaws. We completed a review of the SIM Constitution, and the revised document was approved by the Division membership in March 2014.
3. Strengthen relationship with Society for Business Ethics. We appointed a liaison to SBE and increased our funding to support the annual joint distinguished speaker. The relationship remains strong.

4. Explore ways to reach out to members beyond North America and Europe. We do now have a fairly significant and increasing number of members from Oceania and Asia. But most of our international growth has been across Europe. Beyond Europe, we have not attracted as many new members as we would like. A related organization, the International Association for Business & Society, held its past conference in Australia. This has drawn more visibility to our work “down under”.

5. Adjust committee member and committee chair selection to bring in more new members. We have broadened leadership participation via this method, but progress is limited. It seems likely that designating 50+ associate editors for the program each year has done more to broaden leadership participation than has the committee selection process. SIM Division, more so than any other division, designates associate editors to review the reports of the reviewers and offer recommendations to the program chair. These associate editors are selected based on prior reviewing expertise, and so the roles are open to all members, netting many new and international members. It is hoped that this is a sort of gateway leadership role.

6. Look for new ways to involve members, such as task forces and special projects. The associate editor role noted above is the most substantive step in this direction thus far.

Action Plan for 2015 and Beyond

Given all the above, it seems appropriate to form the following four new committees, as a means of advancing the reach and breadth of SIM Division:

1. Mentoring Committee. We need a structured mentoring program, matching junior scholars to senior scholars. We could designate a set of six topics that all mentoring relationships should address and mentors would agree to hold regular phone calls/Skype meetings with their mentees; perhaps one hour per month for six months. The Division would need to recruit mentors and mentees, do the match-making, and follow up with regular reminders.

2. Online Programs Committee. To extend the reach of the Division beyond one week in August, and to those members who do not attend every year, we need to offer online programming, in the form of webinars and online discussions. We do not necessarily need to create all the original content; other divisions and other organizations may offer, say, research methods webinars of relevance. But we do need to effectively curate offerings for our membership, and create content where we have unique expertise. It is unclear if our website is capable of hosting such content, and so we will need to work with our Webmaster to develop the capacity to host webinars, as well as the capacity to host online conversations on topics of interest to members. Perhaps the Facebook and LinkedIn sites can better function as discussion forums in future years.

3. Plenary Committee. AOM began offering the division plenary format in 2013 and SIM adopted it immediately. It provides a terrific opportunity to bring together the entire Division, since no other SIM events occur at the same time. However, we have not yet sorted out the type of programming that would best fill the 90-minute plenary each year. A committee, headed by the Division Chair, could serve to broaden perspective on the annual content, and to provide the manpower to turn this into a major event that draws many more SIMians to it.

4. Continuity Committee. Though the leadership track is long, we do have regular turnover, and with this turnover can come lack of continuity. We need to better document our practices, procedures, and history, and keep all this in a visible place. Our Division's Secretary will spearhead this committee, and will include the Webmaster, but we will need additional members to gather relevant content and to keep it updated.