



going forward

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2249 Tyler Road
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Dear Reader -

In your hands is a newsletter full of information, ideas and debate — all about your organization, Mensa. *Going Forward's* content ranges from colloquia to chat; our contributors are dialogists, inquirers, "interpreters" — or none of the above. And all of it, we hope, is a smorgasbord for the mind, laid out on our Round Table for all who wish to partake. At a time when many official Mensa publications are offering less filling fare, we encourage a feast of discussion — because we believe that this is the way Mensans and Mensa can remain dynamic and receptive to new ideas.

GF is a private publication; we rely on "word of mouth" to let people know how easy it is to get a free subscription. You may receive *GF* by U.S. mail (send request to LeAnne Porter, address on inside back cover) or read it online (see URL on masthead). Online readers can ensure their notification of new issues by subscribing with Peg Shambo (peg.shambo@gmail.com).

Please share this issue with a Mensa friend. **Pass it on.** Ask friends with big mental appetites if they, too, would like to join in ... *Going Forward*.

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From the Editor

In this issue we are trying to provide you with additional information on the candidates running for election to the American Mensa Committee. Several offices are contested, and each of the candidates running in these contested elections has responded to the question(s) posed by *Going Forward*. We hope that the information contained in these pages, in conjunction with the material in the *Bulletin*, will contribute to you making an informed vote. Please, do vote. Voter turnout in Mensa is relatively low, so your vote really can make a difference!

— LeAnne Porter

Going Forward's Letter to Candidates

My name is LeAnne Porter and I edit *Going Forward*, an unofficial publication that seeks to provide Mensa members with information about our organization. I am sending you one or two questions (depending on the position you are seeking) and encourage you to respond. Nationally elected officers are receiving two questions. One is the same for all candidates for a particular position; one is specifically related to your previous or current functioning within American Mensa. All candidates for Regional Vice Chairman are receiving the same question. These questions are not designed to be easy, but they are designed to give voters some perspective regarding your philosophies toward Mensa and your plans for implementing your ideas if you are elected.

The following procedures will be followed in publishing your responses:

1. Your response(s) will be unedited; please proofread your answer yourself or get someone else to proofread.
2. Responses to general

questions will be truncated after 500 words. Candidates answering specific questions will have 300 words to answer the second question. Word count will be determined using the counter in MS Word.

3. No editorial comments will be inserted with your answers. Your answers will stand on their own merits.
4. Readers of *Going Forward* will be advised of the restrictions imposed on your answers.
5. I prefer to receive answers in an electronic format, preferably a commonly used word processing program such as Word or Word Perfect, but plain text submissions are also fine.
6. I must receive responses by Sunday, March 27, 2005, to ensure publication.

Thank you for running for office and taking the time to answer these questions.

LeAnne Porter

Going Forward



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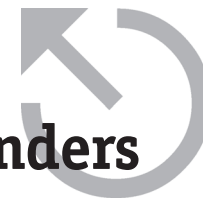
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Pathfinders

Here are the signposts to follow to help you join us on the way to the Round Table spirit. Look for these markers:

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Going Forward's printing and mailing costs are supported

entirely by donations. *GF* has no set subscription rate. *GF* encourages input, participation and independence of thought.

connections



Dear Editor:

I am always happy to receive *Going Forward* but I am disturbed when I see a mentality that thinks anything the AMC does must be stupid, underhand or bad for Mensa. The AMC is always, at least in the greatest part, made up of intelligent people who have been in Mensa for many years and care only for the good of Mensa.

I am also at a loss to understand all the flap about "Risk Management." Risk management is all about insurance. We all practice it. Only a fool would say, "I won't insure my home against fire because it has never burned down before." We install smoke detectors and have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen because if there is a fire we will lose things that are valuable to us. If the house burns down and we do not have insurance, we will be financially devastated. We insure our car, not because we expect to have a major accident, but just in case. We pay for Health Insurance (and still try to keep in good health), not because we are sure we will have enormous medical expenses, but because if we

do, again it will mean financial ruin.

We protect ourselves and our assets. For American Mensa to do any less would be irresponsible.

— Bob Cox
bob.cox1@juno.com

Would it be possible to get two *Going Forward* subscriptions sent to this address? The copy you sent to me of February's is already dog-eared and worn from my showing it around at Mensa-nites.

The humor shown in this issue is well taken. . . .

— Walter Wakefield

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We're always happy to send sample copies in the hopes of getting new subscribers. Our circulation is entirely built by "word of mouth." If you know of someone who would be interested in receiving Going Forward either by mail or electronically, please let me know.*



Chairman

General Question:

Why is it important for American Mensa to have more than 50,000 members?

Russ Bakke

50,000 is rather arbitrary but larger is better. The more members we have, the more members are likely to turn out at events (I think our percentage of active members is dropping, but that just illustrates my point; we need a larger base to provide the same number of active members).

Some have suggested that if we had, say, 10,000 members we would return to the atmosphere we had when we had 10,000 members in the early '70's. I don't think so. Society has changed, and we have to change with it. The Internet has resulted in a practice called "cocooning", where people sit at home and use their computers to surf the net, chat, email, etc. rather than leave their homes to find entertainment. I think this is why our percentage of active members is dropping. We need to reach out to the younger, more Internet-active prospects, and keep them once they've been recruited.

As a sidelight, we get three votes on the International Board of Directors for the first 5,000 members, and one more vote for every 5,000 over that. We get one National Representative (NatRep) for every three votes or fraction thereof.

Sander Rubin

I have never found it useful to set a numerical goal as a basis for policy-making. Numbers are essential for evaluating policies after the fact, but not as *a priori* objectives.

The goals of a society are qualitative. In the case of Mensa, members come first and the goal is to provide satisfactions that individuals cannot achieve in isolation. Growth of Mensa is a source of satisfactions in — at least — two ways: economic and "ecological." There is a fixed cost to running a society regardless of how many members there be. Absorbing that cost over a larger number of members reduces the cost per member and is the key to lowering the dues for each member while maintaining services.

The other source of increased satisfaction is essentially qualitative, although it connects with numbers. The essence of Mensa is the opportunity for making connections among its members. The more members, the greater the diversity and the better the chances of making compatible and lasting connections. Growth creates a "virtuous circle (or cycle)."

Numbers are measures, not goals. After the fact, one can

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Bakke: Continued from Page 3

Thus at 50,000 members we get 12 votes on IBD and 4 NatReps; at 55,000 we'd get 13 votes and another NatRep. But this is of minor importance.

Rubin: Continued from Page 3

evaluate the wisdom of policies and the effectiveness of performance by looking first at the retention rate and then at the recruitment rate. God, of course and as always, is in the details, but unless the overview is sound the details won't work for you.

Specific Question, Bakke:

In the past, you have voted to eliminate the print version of InterLoc. Is this creating two classes of Mensa members, those with net access and those without? Should it be that Internet access is a requirement for Mensa local officers, who are the target audience of InterLoc?

I may have to reconsider that vote, the new editor has done such a wonderful job. I'll note that email access has been a requirement of AMC membership for about ten years, but we are far from ready to make it a requirement for local officers. Everything I've seen says that about 15-20% of our members do not have Internet access. To require it for local officers would more likely force those officers out rather than force them to get it.

Rather than create two classes of members, I thought we could have the office print and mail a few paper copies on request. But given those percentages, we'd either do a LOT of (expensive) custom printing and mailing, or cut 15% from the subscriber list. I don't think either is acceptable.

Specific Question, Rubin:

There have been several instances of people asking you questions about your positions and receiving "see the writings on my website" as a reply. How do you reconcile the educational aspect of being Chairman with the fact that a number of Mensa members do not have and may not want access to the Internet?

Yes, I frequently invite correspondents to visit my website. I don't use the web exclusively (I can walk and chew gum). I have written for *Going Forward*. I have established the M-Pol list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/M-Pol/>, which is minimally moderated by four other people, to provide for open discussion of Mensa politics. I answer letters with letters and discuss issues on the telephone. I use all media available to me and, as AMC Chairman, would respect the reasonable expectations and preferences of all members, and would use *The Bulletin* and *InterLoc* appropriately. That I do A does not imply that I cannot or will not also do B.

Are they important?

I can't imagine anyone saying no to this, but I'm sure someone could come up with some other way to do it. I see Local Groups as the lifeblood of the organization.

What steps would you take to implement your vision of local groups?

The Local Groups work just fine, not perfectly all the time, but what does?

American Mensa has alot of dos and don'ts and we sure do love the English language, just look at all of our Actions Still in Effect. Yes, that was flip, but it still comes down to one thing, trying to keep Mensa the way we like it. That means preserving what we have, making some going forward changes and trying to give everyone enough to make them want to become or stay a member.

As an RVC I would contact each Local Group and set a regular monthly date to talk on the telephone with the LocSec and other officers. I've got a great single-fee telephone calling plan and I have the time and the desire to do it. With that kind of exchange, I think the Local Groups would be well served and I'd be better informed.

Implement **my vision**, it's **our** vision. Let each Local Group implement their own vision and I'll do my best to support their efforts. As an RVC, I believe it would be my duty to serve the best interests of American Mensa and that means each and every member, especially those of Region 9.

Candidate Statements Concluded

REGION 9 — RVC

Henry Miller

Local groups are the heart and soul of Mensa. Aside from the Bulletin, all contact between members and Mensa is through the local group. All national officers derive from the ranks of the local groups. Virtually all member related activities originate with concepts suggested by local members through their local groups. Usually, the only implementation of those concepts is local. Examples; Los Angeles Mensa participated in the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, staged Mensa theatricals, hosted RGs, founded a premises (temporarily) and the hugely successful Side Track fund raiser plus uncountable local social and special interest events. The L.A. Mentary Calendar lists about ninety such events for the month of March, 2005 alone. Without local groups Mensa would have nothing of value to offer. I consider the local group so vital that many years ago I resigned my AMC position, Western Regional Vice Chair, (we had only three regions back then) in its second term to accept the LocSec position in Los Angeles, when the Los Angeles local group was having difficulties.

As Regional Vice Chair, in addition to the local group and individual member assistance the position mandates, I would attempt coordination with adjacent regions to develop multiregional gatherings and other projects. Also, I would foster interaction with the larger community outside Mensa in matters beneficial to the community and to Mensa.

REGION 9 — RVC

Joanna Soper

From your perspective, what is the role of local groups within American Mensa? Are they important?

In our constitution, under The Nature of Mensa, it reads that: Mensa provides a forum for intellectual exchange among members. Its activities include the exchange of ideas by lectures, discussions, journals, special-interest groups, and local, regional, national, and international gatherings...

When we *join* something, it is with the purpose of coming together with something else. When we joined Mensa, we expected to interact in some way with those things listed in The Nature of Mensa. A lot of what I see listed there is active, not passive. Planes can take us to an Annual Gathering or MindGames or Colloquium. Local Groups offer each and every member the opportunity to join something with a lot less time, effort and money.



There are compelling reasons for heavy (not exclusive) reliance on a website.

1. Economy of time and effort.
2. Integrity of discourse. Since the access is public I cannot tell one story to one correspondent and a different one to another.
3. Consistency of context. A question comes from a person whose background I may not know. Since meaning depends on context, I cannot be sure of the full meaning of the question or how the correspondent will interpret my answer. By referring to my website, I hope to provide the questioner with access to my context.
4. Facility for the reader to dig deeper.
5. I understand the web to be a preferred medium for the younger members now joining Mensa who will benefit from learning background.

While all of us have quick, well-functioning minds, each of us has a unique combination of skills, values, conceptions. Mensa will work much better if we respect our differences. I would eschew making demands, rules, or directives. Instead, I suggest that we both ask and tell one another using whatever media we find convenient and economical.

1st Vice Chairman

General Question:

What do you think should be the balance between local groups, the AMC, and employees?

Dan Burg

Local groups, the AMC, and employees each have their place in the world of Mensa. Each has complex interactions both internally and with each other. Other aspects of Mensa, such as International, have their own roles to play. What they

Jim Werdell

The partnership formed by the AMC, the National Office and Local Groups constitutes the backbone of American Mensa. Without any one of those entities, the organization would falter and become but a shadow of what it is today.



all have in common, though, is that each is dependent on and serves the collective group known as individual members.

The relationship between individual members and local groups, the AMC, and employees takes a bit of explanation. As good a place to start as any is with the Constitution of Mensa, the highest governing document in all of Mensa worldwide. The Constitution sets the tone and the standards for Mensa: People who score in the top 2% on certain tests qualify for membership, Mensa has no opinions, etc. The Constitution also provides for national chapters, called "national Mensas." Ours here in the U.S. is American Mensa, Ltd. (AML). The Constitution requires that each national Mensa have a governing body, which in American Mensa is called the "American Mensa Committee" (AMC), and a governing document, which in American Mensa is called the "By-laws of American Mensa." The By-laws may not violate the Constitution of Mensa or international requirements.

The AMC meets quarterly to adopt a budget and conduct other business. As American Mensa, Ltd. is a corporation, the AMC is also the corporate board of directors, with all the duties and responsibilities, legal and otherwise, that this status implies. The membership of American Mensa elects most of the AMC. The AMC currently consists of five nationally-elected members (Chairman, First and Second Vice-Chairmen, Secretary, Treasurer), ten regionally-elected members (Regional Vice-Chair-

This partnership has evolved over the years, partly as a result of: additional dues revenues to fund expansion of the National Office; increased membership prompting the need for greater organizational management; and, changes in the legal environment necessitating the need for risk management and greater protection of the Mensa name and logo.

It's far easier to describe the partnership by identifying some of the functions of each part.

National Office

- Maintenance of non-profit corporation standing
- Compliance with applicable laws
- Assistance in annual and regional gatherings
- Development and maintenance of member benefits
- Management of the testing program
- National newsletter publication
- Development of strategies for finding new members and retaining existing members
- Day-to-day management of the treasuries and investments

AMC

- Member benefit review
- Control of fiscal policies and expenditures
- Development of policies for treasuries and investments
- Support for local group problems
- Protection of the Mensa name and logo
- Maintenance of consistent local group bylaws
- Oversight of the AML bylaws
- Mensa International interface

Local Group Responsibilities

- Fiscal status reporting

Of paramount importance is the education of every LG officer and/or leader in the science and fine art of volunteerism, which is taught, mentored, and practiced diligently at the level of felicity and cooperation.

All transitions of power are begun at the outset of each office through an established orientation procedure carried out online at the national website. It is a self-paced orientation that brings each officer, whether prospective, newly inducted, or tenured, through all the basic history, policy and procedure, and relevant job description data.

Upon candidacy for a position, each prospective or reinstated officer is required to document one's personal goals and objectives for the position for the term sought, as well as one's goals and objectives for the membership served, the leadership position engaged, and the celebration planned.

Each officer is so sufficiently informed of one's responsibilities and rights, and so amply supported by predecessors and assistants, as to be capable of pledging to *Get more out of the job than I put into it*, thus establishing the institution of job satisfaction as a prime objective for seeking office.

Orientation is supplemented by ongoing inservice that's carried out via an officers' mentorship program, wherein as a prerequisite for the job, each officer agrees to support one's successor for a minimum of one-fourth the length of the term or six months, which ever is more.

Each officer or prospective officer has the benefit, by way of archived exit reports, of their predecessor's goals and objectives, successes and failures, and recommendations and caveats.

Matters such as reimbursement of expenses, deadlines, chain of command, grievance, and so forth are clearly spelled out before misunderstandings or disputes arise so that individuals can be aware of the assets and liabilities of their position before emotional engagement overtakes the circumstances.

The united forces of leadership of a combined LG revolution have prevailed upon the AMC to make *InterLoc* become an unencumbered, **monthly** version of its present self, replete with not only the vibrant and didactic reporting and discussion of it current audience but also a tool of education in a thorough and ongoing genuine leadership development through the study of leaders and leadership theory, a quarterly workbook on relevant issues and practices, and the sprinkled embellishment of facts and fiction through humor, art, and other forms of mental stimulation so as to more effectively address the broad range of learning styles present in leaders of genius.

American Mensa is a society of LGs, by LGs, and for LGs.

Region 6 Vice Chairman Questions Continued from Page 17

The publications and programs of the local groups and SIGs provide the benefit that keeps members renewing their membership. The local group testing programs facilitate membership growth.

During my term as SIGs Officer, I worked to protect SIGs from unreasonable and unjustified outside interference. As a member of the Risk Management Committee, I recognize that there are very valid concerns about risk. However, risk management must be practical. A potential liability of \$100 does not justify sweeping authoritarian controls. There are those whose vision of SIGs is one where there is significant central control. The SIG related ASIEs passed during my term as SIGs Officer guarantee the autonomy of the SIGs.

The true issue is how can we help local groups? The Leadership Development Workshops are a wonderful vehicle to share with the members and officers of local groups, the wealth of knowledge and experience available through Mensa. LDWs are funded, but don't seem to happen often enough.

The National Office has a wealth of information, but the local group officers must know for what to ask. As proctor coordinator of my local group, I receive a Prospect Report each month that identifies all who contacted the National Office requesting information about joining Mensa. I now have almost 500 prospects to whom I send a reminder email each month with the dates, times and locations of the Mensa Admissions Tests. I was shocked to discover that a friend, who is the Proctor Coordinator for her local group, does not receive the Proctor report. The LocSec/President of the local group must instruct the National Office to send that report to the Proctor Coordinator. There is a wealth of information. The challenge is to get it to those who need it.

REGION 9 — RVC

Karen Bauernschmidt

IF I WERE LOCAL GROUP CZAR

Local Groups (LG) are the body, mind, and soul of American Mensa. They are supported amply by the National Office (NO) and the American Mensa Committee (AMC).

There is a dynamic and constant dialogue between the AMC, NO, and LG regarding both ongoing and episodic activities, including substantive actions passed by motion as well as those intended, all by way of secured online files. LG officers are invited parties to all AMC meetings via secure website resources.

Burg: Continued from Page 6

men), two former national Chairmen, and four appointed members (Communications, Development, and Membership Officers and Director of Science and Education). The AMC also hires an employee, the Executive Director, to run a business office to promote the aims of Mensa within the budget adopted by the AMC. The Executive Director, in turn, hires other employees to assist her in furthering these aims. The national office coordinates the testing and admissions program, promotes Mensa to the general public to attract new members, maintains the membership roster, etc. The office staff works with the AMC and with local groups to provide these services.

Analogously to the way national Mensas are formally allowed in the Constitution of Mensa, local groups within American Mensa are formally allowed in the Bylaws of American Mensa. Also analogously to the way bylaws of national Mensas are required to meet certain international requirements, bylaws of local groups within American Mensa are required to meet certain national requirements, known as the "Minimum Standard Bylaws for Local Groups." The Minimum Standards are designed to protect the rights of the individual members of local groups; examples include requiring elections, requiring that financial records be reviewed by someone who wasn't involved with the collection or disbursement of money during the period being reviewed, etc.

Local groups, the AMC, and employ-

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Werdell: Continued from Page 6

Newsletter and event calendar publication
Local testing management
Development of events and local benefits for members

Although the above list is only a representative sample of the multitude of functions, the intertwined responsibilities act as a whole to insure a smoothly functioning, progressive and successful organization, with the following advantages:

- Avoids unnecessary duplication of services
- Shares expertise and systems
- Projects a unified voice to the outside world
- Provides an environment that attracts new members and retains existing members
- Builds and maintains the Mensa image
- Provides quantified member benefits
- Protects the organization from the effects of litigious attacks
- Maintains the integrity of the requirement for membership

The distribution of the functions I itemized above has evolved over time. I believe that they have been appropriately allocated. Unfortunately, there are few places in AML's official documents that identify where functions belong and fewer documents that show that all parties agree to and understand what those functions are. All agreements and understandings are informal.

The formalization of the agree-

Continued on Page 8

ees serve individual members in different ways, but all work for the betterment of Mensa.

ments and understanding remains, and should be a task before the next AMC. The agreements may require negotiations, but there is no question that education will surely be required.

Specific Question, Burg:

You currently chair the Name and Logo Committee. With the recent sponsoring of events by organizations and entities outside of Mensa, what do you think our policy should be regarding the use of Mensa-owned trademarks, which include the name “Mensa” and/or our distinctive logo?

International Mensa already has a well-developed policy regarding the use of Mensa-owned trademarks. I agree with this policy, and in fact helped develop the most recent (2002) updates to it:

Policy and Standards for Commercial Use of the ‘Mensa’ Name

The ‘Mensa’ name is a valuable asset and it is the duty of the Officers of the Society to preserve and protect that asset.

“Commercial Use” shall be defined as meaning the use of the ‘Mensa’ name or logo on any product, service or activity offered to non-members of Mensa, but not including IQ tests.

All arrangements for commercial use of the name shall be subject to the following rules:

Any commercial use of the ‘Mensa’ name or logo shall be consistent with Mensa’s stated aims and objectives and shall not in any way lead the consumer or user to believe that they will in any way increase their IQ.

Permission or license to use the ‘Mensa’ name and mark for commercial purposes shall not be granted for any product, service, or activity which would:

- reflect upon Mensa in a derogatory or negative way;
- be likely to diminish the reputation or standing of Mensa in the opinion of members or non-members;
- be likely to cause injury or harm to the consumer or user.

In addition, the following exclusions shall apply, the ‘Mensa’ name and logo shall not be used on:



One could ask if the wheels on a car are important? Yes, they are. Is the engine important? Yes. Are the brakes important? Yes. All of these parts are important. However, those questions miss the point. The purpose of the car is not an excuse to assemble parts — it is to travel somewhere. Together, the parts make up the car. However, the parts are not the car.

Local groups do not come together to form Mensa. The local groups *are* Mensa. Every local group, in and of itself, is Mensa. Everything else in Mensa is important only to the degree that it supports the smooth functioning of the local groups.

Other organizations and clubs often have a specific concept, activity, or central organizing principle at their hearts. A bird watching club is focused upon watching birds. A car club revolves around cars. However, both the birds and cars will be there whether or not people are watching them in an organized fashion, or otherwise. Neither the birds nor the cars care that there is a club. Mensa is different. We have no single organizing principle save the entrance requirement. Therefore, there is no Mensa if not for the membership. If nobody is thinking about Mensa, then Mensa does not exist. The members *are* Mensa and the members are found in the local groups.

My vision of local groups is that they are the nexus of the majority of all Mensa activity. Obviously, all local activities happen within a local group. In addition, RG’s are planned and executed by local groups. Finally, local print and electronic publications are the primary method of communications with members. Therefore, the primary focus of Mensa as a national organization should be to provide financial, administrative and moral support to the local groups.

However, there are clearly a number of functions that only a national-level office can perform. These are important functions. Nevertheless, in my vision, I see the role of the national office as primarily supportive of local groups and activities as opposed to being proscriptive.

REGION 6 — RVC

Ray O’Connor

In summary, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. I want to be RVC so I can protect local groups from those who wish to implement their vision of local groups.

Local groups are American Mensa. Together with SIGs, local groups provide the activities in which the members of Mensa participate.



Region 5 Vice Chairman Questions Continued from Page 15

decide how to do it. It will take the good will and the hard work of a lot of Mensans to change national policy, but change we must.

I don't have all the answers. I'm counting on a lot of help from a lot of you. We have only 1% of 6 million potential members. I am unsatisfied; I know we can do better; I long to see more vibrant local groups. We must have a proactive membership quest.

I'm not just asking for your vote; I'm asking for your help.

Thank you,
Lewis Gosnell

REGION 5 — RVC

Mike Seigler

My position on local groups is simple. They are the heart of Mensa (or any social organization). Local groups should be the driving force in Mensa with the flexibility to provide the services the local members want. This requires more funding and more local control.

One of the things I support is the concept of a Local Secretaries Council. Steps towards this include waiving the AG registration fees for Local Secretaries, dedicating space and time at the AG for a meeting of the Local Secretaries, and allotting time on the AMC agenda for a report on the concerns raised at the Local Secretaries meeting. No one is in a better position to communicate the concerns of a local group than the members of that group.

Best regards,
Mike

REGION 6 — RVC

Stan Alluisi

From my perspective the role of local groups within Mensa is simply that they *are* Mensa. The only reason for any bureaucratic organ or position to exist outside of the local groups is to provide support for the care and feeding of the local groups. People join Mensa to meet other people and to do interesting things. Meeting people and doing things happens in local groups. I doubt anyone ever joined Mensa just to be an administrator. Yes, local groups are important. But the word "important" in the question does not convey the degree to which local groups are important to Mensa. Please allow me to explain by way of a negative analogy.

Burg: Continued from Page 8

- anything that is illegal;
- anything that is tied to religion;
- anything that is connected with politics;
- any sex or dating services;
- any financial investments;
- anything connected with gambling;
- any alcoholic products;
- any firearms;
- any tobacco products;
- any pharmaceutical products.

Unless there are other identifiable and measurable advantages to Mensa, monetary compensation shall be required when permission or license to use the 'Mensa' name and mark is granted for commercial purposes.

Specific Question, Werdell:

You have been elected Director of Administration on the International Board of Directors, while at the same time running for a position on the American Mensa Committee. Why would this not pose a conflict of interest on your part, since on the one hand you would be trying to advance the goals of Mensa International while on the other hand you would seek to promote the positions of American Mensa within the IBD? As an example, consider the question of a vote on an increase in the international component assessed to national Mensas by MIL

The question views the dual positions from a negative perspective. I believe that holding positions on the two boards actually provides an opportunity, and, therefore, represents a positive situation.

Looking at the issue from this positive perspective, the dual roles mean that AML will have an additional vote on the IBD in situations where my international responsibilities are moot. In addition, the international experience and knowledge gained from the international position has and will provide a much better perspective of the Mensa International arena when I participate on the AMC.

It is rather easy to answer this question since I have held dual positions for the past twenty-one months. As both AML Treasurer and MIL Director of Administration during that time, I have not encountered one instance where I have had to abstain because of a conflict of interest. The two votes on the international component, for example, were both unanimous. In fact, I have rarely seen a situation where an action that is beneficial to Mensa International is not beneficial to American Mensa. Even if such a conflict would present itself, I could easily resolve it by abstaining on a vote or recusing myself from participation in an activity.

2nd Vice Chairman

General Question:

How do you view the Minimum Standard Bylaws for local groups? Are they appropriate for a social organization? Please explain.

Tony Jackowski

Every organization, whether social or professional, needs to have some structure in order to run efficiently. Without some form of guidelines to follow, satellite branches of the organization (or Local Groups, in the case of Mensa), could begin to feel disconnected from the larger organization. Guidelines give our local groups a sense of formality, cohesion with the whole, and help build a strong local board. Many members believe that the Minimum Standards are carved in stone and must be obeyed at all costs. My personal belief is that the Minimum Standard Bylaws should be used as “Guidelines” for running the business of the local group. Strict adherence to them, especially when applied to local groups of less than 100 members, can be constricting, illogical and, in some cases, impossible to follow. My view should not be seen as endorsing the bending of our rules, but more of an unclenching of the fist to give our local groups a little flexibility. I would like to work toward a balance between a set of simple, core minimum standards, with a separate document containing suggestions and ideas from which local groups could draw to fit their individual needs. Whether Minimum Standard Bylaws or ASIEs, it has always seemed illogical to me to create rules that will not or can not be followed, or will be ignored by the majority of our local groups.

Scott Rainey

This question is about the relationship between American Mensa, Limited, and our local groups. A minimum standard for bylaws is _certainly appropriate_ for a social organization of our size and complexity. That said, _the process_ by which we generate, review and approve them at the national level could definitely stand review.

Getting from: “The way we’ve always done things” to: “A better way to do things,” is neither simple, nor without it’s own challenges. It is just one of the issues I hope to address if our members decide to hire me for this office.

Elissa Rudolph

The minimum standard bylaws for local groups are loose guidelines designed to assist the local officers in managing their members’ funds. Any time there is money involved, there needs to be a set of rules to govern the utilization of that money. Officers in any orga-

attract and foster future leaders and dedicated volunteers. The beloved newsletters all take root and flower from the LGs. Important articles often originate in them that would be thought twice about before submitting to a single national publication. The LGs give voice to so many who otherwise feel they are without outlets of expression. LGs foster pride in service and participation. New members have good opportunity to see how, with some effort, they can gain their own voices to express not only in print; but, directly to their intelligent peers at various gatherings, provided by LGs. Asking if LGs are important seems ludicrous. What would any of us be without LGs? We would pay dues to some far off organization, receiving one national publication, probably with little of real interest; and, of course, no interaction or socializing. The invention of the LGs was truly genius at work. May they ever LIVE!

What steps would you take to implement your vision of local groups?

First, and foremost, is to increase membership. It is non-pareil. Second, I encourage participation in money-raising events; and, make it fun.

Third, working with MERF should be encouraged to all active members; as well as partial initial activity of new members to study its goals.

Fourth, I work to encourage members who were formerly active, or who have not been active, to come join in with nice, intelligent people to make a difference in their own lives.

While I have many more ideas, the above encompasses much of “the Big Picture”. These principles are ingrained in me. Thank You for reading this.

REGION 5 — RVC

Lewis Gosnell

Local groups are the heart and soul of Mensa; the members are the life blood. We bond with one another in the activities of local groups. Our top priority must be to increase membership and provide activities in more cities. There are too many areas that are not within reasonable driving distance of local group activities.

Soon, our leaders will choose how to distribute a massive amount of money. Some will favor higher funding for local groups; some, increased funding for programs. Though these are worthwhile endeavors, growth is our primary need. Growth is the key to our future. We can have local activities in more cities, and better funded programs through increased membership, without a counterproductive dues increase.

We must first agree to commit our resources to this project; then

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ironically often aren't that close to each other.

At the national level, individual groups become "visible" only when they are potential hosts for a national event (AG, Colloquium, Mind Games®, etc.) or when they have a crisis. While plaudits are given to a group for a nice newsletter or having the highest percentage of early renewals, this type of recognition does not confer any clout to the group (e.g. all members get reduced dues or an award certificate). A group is not inherently important, and most have little name recognition.

If all groups were eliminated, American Mensa could continue to operate quite well I think. People living in a certain area could continue to meet. Those with similar interests would still have a way of getting in touch with fellow enthusiasts. The biggest change would be the lack of a "local" newsletter - perhaps it would be replaced by a regional one, and/or maybe planned activities would be posted to a central site where searches could be done by interest, date, location, etc. One big plus might be the elimination of the political wars that wreak havoc in groups; another would be the end of the "Volunteer Vacuum" - no more pleas to step forward to be on a committee or to run for local office.

I don't see a "groupless" American Mensa as anarchy. It would mirror many clubs whose members are spread over a wide geographic area (Trekkies, Civil/Revolutionary War reenactors, Burning Man, etc.). Many have annual conventions and/or regional get togethers. Some may produce newsletters or other periodic communications. By reducing the organisational framework to a skeleton, the club is freer to move in whatever way its members wish.

One way to begin to implement this idea is to dissolve "borderline" groups: the ones where the newsletter just barely gets published four times a year; elections haven't been held in years; one person has several roles: e.g. editor and president and membership officer. These groups would not be subsumed into neighbouring ones, but their members would be able to be in contact with the surrounding groups and the whole country.

Why not try it? What do we have to lose?

REGION 1 — RVC

Walter Wakefield

From your perspective, what is the role of local groups within American Mensa? Are they important?

In the American Mensa body, the Local Groups are the blood. Without the LGs, AM would be no more durable than a cut flower. LGs

nization that involves members' money, not-for-profit (which is what American Mensa is, different from non-profit) or otherwise, are fiduciarily responsible for those funds. Since the minimum standards are guidelines, local groups can customize them according to some consensus among the officers. Their specific bylaws can stand for many years or be revamped as times and officers change, as long as the minimum standards are still adhered to.

And, yes, they are appropriate to a social organization such as American Mensa because in the final analysis they address the management of the members' funds, that part of the membership fee that comes back to the local groups. If we were not handling money, perhaps there would be no need for any minimums.

The minimum standards also assist local groups in designing in some organized fashion a hierarchy of responsible members—local secretary (or president, as some group leaders choose to be addressed), treasurer, secretary, and so forth. I see these guidelines as a roadmap, not a dictatorial edict.

Specific Question, Tony Jackowski:

You have served on the AMC for many years in many capacities, sometimes advocating pro-establishment actions and sometimes bucking the powers that be. What precipitates your decisions?

While it might seem that at times I buck the "powers that be" and at other times vote with the establishment, what I am actually doing is voting logically. It's easy to vote on a motion based on how you, personally, "feel" about the subject at hand. This is itself not wrong. It's also easy to vote with a clique. What I do is try to look at the whole picture, not just what is written in the motion. (How will it affect American Mensa if I vote for this motion? What will the effect be if I should vote against it?) If I believe it is in the best interests of the organization as a whole to vote against the popular consensus, then I do. I'm not saying that I don't vote the way I personally feel about a subject, as personal feelings do play a very important role on the AMC, but I weigh my feelings and instincts against reasoned considerations of what's best for the organization and try to find a good balance. When considering an issue before the AMC, I think you must carefully weigh the pros and cons of the motion, add a little of your history and personal feelings on the subject, factor in a good measure of member input, and always keep the members of American Mensa in mind as a primary determinant. Pleasing one faction or another, in my case, is not part of this process.

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Specific Question, Scott Rainey:

You have in the past made strong statements designed to get people thinking about controversial issues, such as offering centralized printing for local group newsletters. As part of the Communications Committee you are currently actively involved in discussions about American Mensa exerting control over websites owned and/or run by local groups, SIGs, and private members, that are not hosted by AML. What are your views on this and why?

I make strong statements because I have strong opinions. I think Mensa should be faster, cheaper, better... and 10 times bigger. My ideas for achieving this are posted on <http://www.scottraine.com>.

I have strong opinions about what's best for Mensa, but the centralized printing idea was not one of them. Hmmm. That story may entertain.

Four years ago, I noticed that laserprinter/copiers with folding & stapling attachments were getting faster / cheaper / better. *Cool!* Units to cost-effectively produce our newsletters would soon be affordable. Would there be a market within Mensa? I asked our editors:

"If it were possible to subcontract your printing, binding, labeling, and mailing to the National Office (or another contractor) for the same or less than what you pay now, would you be interested?"

If there were local group interest, we could cost out machines and get bids. If that penciled out, a service could be offered to groups who wanted it. Repeat: "who wanted it."

Medium-size local groups were enthusiastic. However this simple question generated hostility from some old-timers.

Today, super-laserprinters pencil out... for local groups directly.

Another club I'm in uses one to print, fold, staple and address: 1,200 8-sheet, 11x17 full-color monthly newsletters. Their lease and supplies costs less than my 700-member Mensa group's printing.

Three hundred words can't address Local Group / SIG website issues. It's about balancing member privacy and member safety with keeping things open and interesting, while protecting Mensa from random liabilities.

What seems intuitive, takes intense work to create a coherent policy draft. Whatever balance one might strike on one's own computer, must then be sold to a sub-committee, that must then sell a derivative idea to the full committee, that must then sell...

Gentle readers: Please stay tuned. Please stay involved. Your voice does matter.

Specific Question, Elissa Rudolph:

How are you going to balance the jobs of 2nd Vice Chair, possible Nat Rep, 2006 World Gathering Chair, and your real life for the next few years without delegating the primary responsibilities of each job to others?

Great question! I've asked myself this many times and the answer I get is, why not? The 2nd Vice Chair position is the "special projects" position. Any unusual item of business that comes up (think, ProxyQuest) falls into this chair's lap. Routine duties that the chairman cannot fulfill are taken on by the 1st Vice Chair. So the top position is well covered. Call in the 2nd vice chair for special, out-of-the-blue events, such as....drum roll, please....the World Gathering 2006! Having your event coordinator in this position helps that person be on top of everything that is going on that could possibly impact the event. Hey, if I don't win this position I hope Tony Jackowski does because he's my right hand man for the WG06. We need someone near the top.

I won't be doing WG06 alone—there is a cadre of volunteers for WG06 whose experience and dedication are unmatched. Just look at the names on WG06.us.mensa.org. Truly I have the best organization behind me to put on a fantastic event. So, yes, I can handle both sets of responsibilities, as long as my staff continues to be as dedicated as I know they are.

My eye won't be exclusively on WG06—I realize there will be other projects that will grab my attention. That's why it is so necessary to have a dependable crew for this specific event. And I believe I do.

Regional Vice Chairman

REGIONAL VICE CHMN. REG. 1 REG. 5 REG. 6 REG. 9

From your perspective, what is the role of local groups within American Mensa? Are they important? What steps would you take to implement your vision of local groups?

REGION 1 — RVC

Marghretta McBean

Unlike the corporate model in which a constituency often has a great deal of clout, Mensa's local groups play a far more subdued role. This is due, I think, to the way geography defines a group: one joins Mensa and finds that one is automatically a member of the group that embraces one's zipcode. While there may be some affinity for the folks living nearby, that is not always the case. Local groups feel they must work hard to find mutual interests for their members, who

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