

Communication Guidelines for GSA Divisions & Sections: *The Member Community & Email*

GSA maintains several sophisticated communications platforms for corresponding with members and others about GSA business and opportunities. It may be obvious when a specific communication channel is best suited for a particular message, but often there are areas of overlap between one channel and another, and the best course of action for maximum impact is unclear. This document is intended to help you understand how communications work through the Member Community and the Informz email system so you can weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each and use both to maximum effect.

COMMUNICATING THROUGH THE MEMBER COMMUNITY

When one signs up for a Division or Section on their GSA Membership form, they are automatically added to that community. Division members are auto-subscribed to their community email notifications in a daily digest format (notification preferences can be changed by the user at any time). Section members may choose to opt-in. Each community features a discussion forum and a community library. Library or discussion content (with or without email notification) can be viewed online by active Division or Section members when they log in.

Content

In all communities, discussion forum posts generate an email to its members according to their notification preferences for that group (real time, daily digest, or no email). Individuals are encouraged to use the discussion forum which acts somewhat like a list serve to engage with other community members on topics of import. An attachment to any given discussion post automatically creates an associated library item that members can reference online (login required) or access via a link in the email notification (no login required).

While discussion posts and library items are accessible by Division and Section members only (and are not subject to search engines), they do automatically populate as a 'teaser' on a Division microsite's home page. Anyone who clicks on the post or library item will be prompted to log in to see more. Division *microsites* have a public-facing home page whereas Sections have *community* home pages which require a login.

Recipients of a discussion-post email can reply to sender or reply to the whole group **directly from their email client** without having to log in to the community. This creates convenient 2-way conversations, which lend themselves to different kinds of messages than one-way "blast" emails.

Newsletter Distribution

For an entire Section or Division, a scenario might be that a discussion post lets everyone know that the latest newsletter is now available on the website and here is a link to it. This would be similar to—and may duplicate—an email sent/received through Informz. (Touchpoint frequency in marketing is not a bad thing.) NOTE: Sections can use the attachment function. However, Divisions would link to a publicly accessible document on their microsite ([see Division newsletter procedure](#)).

An extension of that message through the Community may include an invitation for feedback or comment. For example, "This is the Division's upcoming XX anniversary; read the article on page 1 and give us your suggestions as to ways we can celebrate." An email is generated to the entire Division or Section, and members can comment and reply. This creates opportunity for greater engagement among Division members.

Procedures

Community posts do not require headquarters intervention, and may be faster and more efficient. Training is available for Division webmasters and other authorized spokespersons.

Metrics

Usage metrics for a 30-day period are available through the community platform provider. Please inquire for details.

Costs

GSA pays a flat monthly fee for the online Member Community, regardless of the volume of usage.

Impacts

Members can opt out of receiving emails from any or all groups through the member community. Alternatively, they can set a preference for real-time, or a periodic digest of email activity.

To recap, benefits of using the Member Community include:

- two-way communications and the opportunity to engage members (social media benefits)
- broad distribution with email notification/response (email benefits)
- most economical choice for GSA and Sections/Divisions
- most timely choice; does not require HQ participation

COMMUNICATING THROUGH BLAST EMAIL

GSA contracts with Informz for its mass emailing system, and has provided email services to Sections and Divisions at no cost, upon request from the Secretary or authorized designate, for many years. This system uses templates in html code that allow for branding, graphical layouts, and other visual enhancements to messages, and also offers robust analytics on emails sent.

Content

Examples of email correspondence between Section or Division leadership and their members include: Election information, annual meeting information, calls for award nominations, newsletters, and student announcements, to name a few. This is one-way distribution; messages go to members' inboxes.

Procedures

Emails are created by the Section or Division, and forwarded to Darlene Williams for distribution with instructions for sending to specified audiences—all members of the Division, students only, and so forth. GSA will provide backup coverage for Darlene to ensure timely distribution from HQ.

Metrics

Detailed information is available through Informz as to how many emails were sent, bounced, or opened, which links were clicked on, how the emails were accessed (e.g. on a mobile device), and more. GSA staff does not necessarily have time to check and analyze every message, but Sections and Divisions are welcome to request this information in order to improve the efficacy of their communications.

Costs

At the volume GSA purchases emails through our service, the cost is approximately \$7.30 per 1,000 messages sent. Although the cost is minimal, it can add up over time and with larger groups.

Impacts

Members can opt out of receiving GSA emails on any topic (list), or can unsubscribe from all future GSA correspondence through Informz. List management, including keeping track of and honoring opt-outs and obeying CANSPAM and other legislative mandates is extremely important and can be challenging. GSA takes great care to operate within legal and ethical guidelines for email distribution.

OTHER COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

GSA also supports Section and Division communications through websites, social media, and other channels. See the [Communications Overview](#) on your [Leadership Resources page](#).

The Member Community supports blog capabilities as well. If your group is considering an outside vendor account in any communications media, please discuss with the GSA Communications team first, to ascertain how we may be able to help.

Contact Darlene Williams (dwilliams@geosociety.org) with questions.