

HIPS Public Relations Annual Report for 2016  
Submitted by Cathy Egerer, PR Chair

As PR Chair, it's a pleasure to work hand in hand with other HIPS Chairs to help them reach their goals. Here is an overview of PR activities for 2016:

- We reprinted our membership brochures and distributed them to botanical gardens, HIPS members, and all 155 (at the time) local iris clubs. The latter was prompted by a conversation with a HIPS member who said many people in his club weren't familiar with HIPS, and he felt it was the same with other clubs. I reached out to every club president and sent an informational packet with membership brochures to share.
- The HIPS display at the AIS Convention in New Jersey brought in 15 new members. To support the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens, HIPS donated 25 copies of the Spring 2016 ROOTS to sell, with the proceeds going to Presby. This was so successful that we repeated it with the Fall 2016 issue and will try to continue in the future with some of our extra copies.
- HIPS spearheaded an effort to bring Dr. Milan Blazek to Presby for the AIS Convention. Milan is perhaps the foremost iris geneticist in the world and it was an honor and a great pleasure for convention attendees to meet him. Milan was one of the recipients of the HIPS Distinguished Service Award, which was presented to him at the convention. In his words, "To visit the famous Presby Gardens is a lifelong dream come true."
- We arranged to videotape the HIPS program at the convention, and it is now available for viewing online. This was very successful and future presentations may also be recorded for later viewing.
- Nancy McDonald and I gave a demonstration of teleconferencing to interested AIS Board members.
- HIPS partnered with Myddelton House Garden in England to replace their lost British Dykes Medal-winning irises. They are interested in helping us in return and are working with GG program administrator Doug Paschall.
- The number of people following our HIPS Facebook page increased by 90% in 2016 and we now have over 2500 followers. HIPS member Mike Unser posts photos regularly, and we use the page for announcements and items of information. If you use Facebook, be sure to Like us!
- We ramped into high gear to promote the HIPS Rhizome Sale. Facebook was a great platform, and several volunteers promoted the sale on pages they manage or follow. I worked with Wayne Messer to place notices in the AIS electronic newsletter, *News & Notes*, and several folks posted notices on other garden sites. An e-mail went out to all HIPS members reminding them of the sale dates and directing them to the HIPS website for information and instructions. It worked – this year's sale was a record-breaker!
- I finished up the year by consolidating all the online e-mail addresses with those in our membership records, in preparation for starting an e-mail newsletter. The first newsletter went out in January, 2017 to 597 HIPS members. Plans are to send a newsletter at least once a month, and hopefully this will increase our member retention rate.

Members who would like membership brochures to pass out, please contact me at [pr@historiciris.org](mailto:pr@historiciris.org). Your suggestions are always welcome!