

UKSS Newsletter Issue 4

Summer 2021



Spring has arrived in the northern hemisphere and with it comes a new optimism as widespread uptake of vaccinations seems to be allowing social activities to open up again. The Committee has taken the decision to hold this year's conference on-line, but we are looking forward to future events in which face-to-face networking and discussion can be held freely again.

As always, the Management Committee would like to hear feedback from you, our membership:

ukssnewsletter@gmail.com

Contents

Membership News & Events	page 1
Committee Activities in a time of COVID	page 3
UKSS International Conference – 21 June 2021 Call for Papers	page 8

MEMBERSHIP NEWS & EVENTS

SCiO UK Virtual Open Meeting - May 2021

– open to all and free of charge, but please book

Virtual Open Meeting: A series of presentations of general interest to Systems and Complexity in Organisation's members ... [Read more](#)

Gaining Visibility of Informal Networks within an Organisation - Ben Simpson, Denis Bourne

Art and Architecture: Effectively Communicating Models of Systems - Tom McDermott

A variety of other events from the Community of Systems Practitioners can be viewed on the SCiO website:

<https://www.systemspractice.org/events>

The 7th International Workshop on Socio-Technical Perspective in IS development (STPIS'21)

Please consider submitting by 16th July 2021 for STPIS'21 - 14th-15th October 2021.

This year, the STPIS will take place in connection with the Italian Chapter of the Association for Information Systems (ItAIS), in Trento in Italy.

Both on-campus and virtual alternatives for those who cannot travel are planned for the STPIS'21, further details see website: <https://stpis.org/>

Important dates:

Initial submission deadline: 16. July 2021

Author notification: 20. August 2021

Registration deadline: To be announced

Camera ready deadline: 24th September 2021

Workshop dates: 14. – 15. October 2021

All deadlines are 23:59 Anywhere on Earth (AoE) (UTC -12).

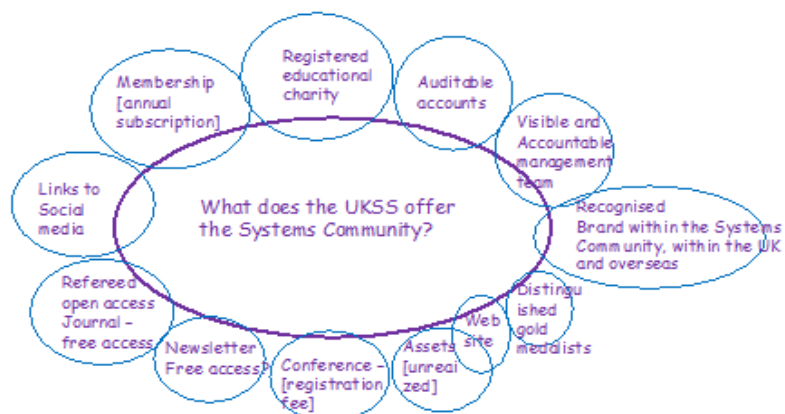
Dr Peter Bednar, on behalf of the Organizing Committee

The UKSS Management Committee: activities at the time of COVID

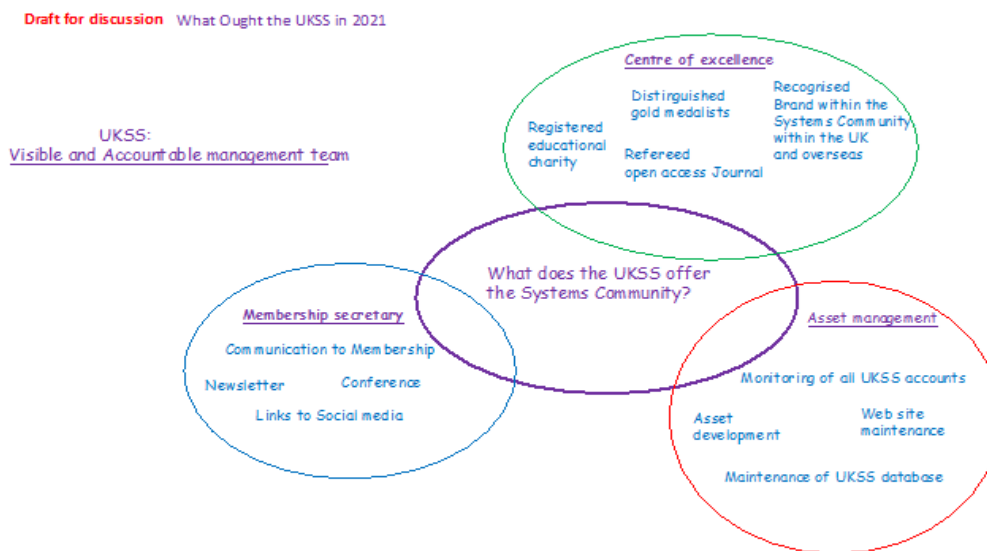
You may recall we decided, more than two years ago, that our management team would collaborate 'virtually'. We would manage the society remotely. A bold step at the time – having managed the society for close on 50 years through regular face to face meetings – but it has worked very well. Although do meet in person, usually at our annual conference and had planned to do so more often, but then Covid struck. Our earlier decision to communicate virtually and the experience that we have gained have stood us in good stead. The Covid 'shut down' gave us an opportunity to think more about the future of the UKSS. Over the past months the UKSS management team have been reviewing the way that the society operates and where changes could be made. This is not an unusual activity as successive UKSS management teams have carried out similar exercises in the past but not remotely. The exercise was undertaken using the Appreciative Inquiry Method (AIM) and what follows are the diagrams that were developed along the way. Having used this approach many times it was a novelty to undertake the exercise entirely by Zoom. Although lacking the dynamic of sharing the same physical space the exercise worked tolerably well. What we ended with was, we felt, developed enough to circulate to members and encourage further participation. The expectation is that you, the members, will look at the diagrams and send us feedback so that we can develop them into a model for the future. The exercise highlighted several areas where we need to reflect upon (by we I mean us all) and build the Society so that we can face another 50 years with confidence.

Hopefully how we arrived at the outcomes and areas to be explored further can be seen – i.e., the exercise is 'recoverable'.

What 'IS' the UKSS in 2020



The above Composite Systems Map showing the combined view that each member of the management team has of the Society (what IS the case) – that is to say what we felt is the case of the UKSS now – what we think it looks like. This map was the result of various email exchanges.

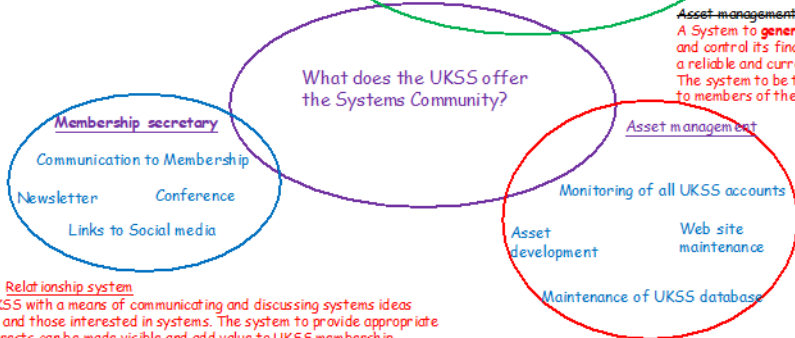


The above is an amalgamation of the Composite Map for ‘what ought to be the case’. To arrive at this point we had carried out the same exercise as for the first Map. To simplify the representation of the maps I amalgamated the separate ‘oughts’ into clusters and gave each cluster a name that I felt represented what was within. This was circulated and in the absence of disagreement a definition of each ‘cluster’ was provided to clarify what was meant.

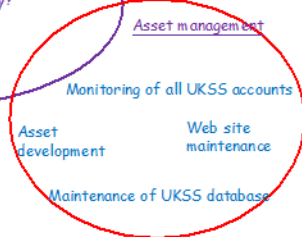
Centre of excellence—Quality control and Quality Assurance System
 A system to uphold and promote the values of a learned systems society as exemplified by its distinguished gold medalists and through its responsibility as an educational charity.



Asset management Resource Management System
 A System to generate income, collect monitor and control its finances and assets and maintain a reliable and current database of UKSS member. The system to be transparent and accountable to members of the society and pertinent statutory

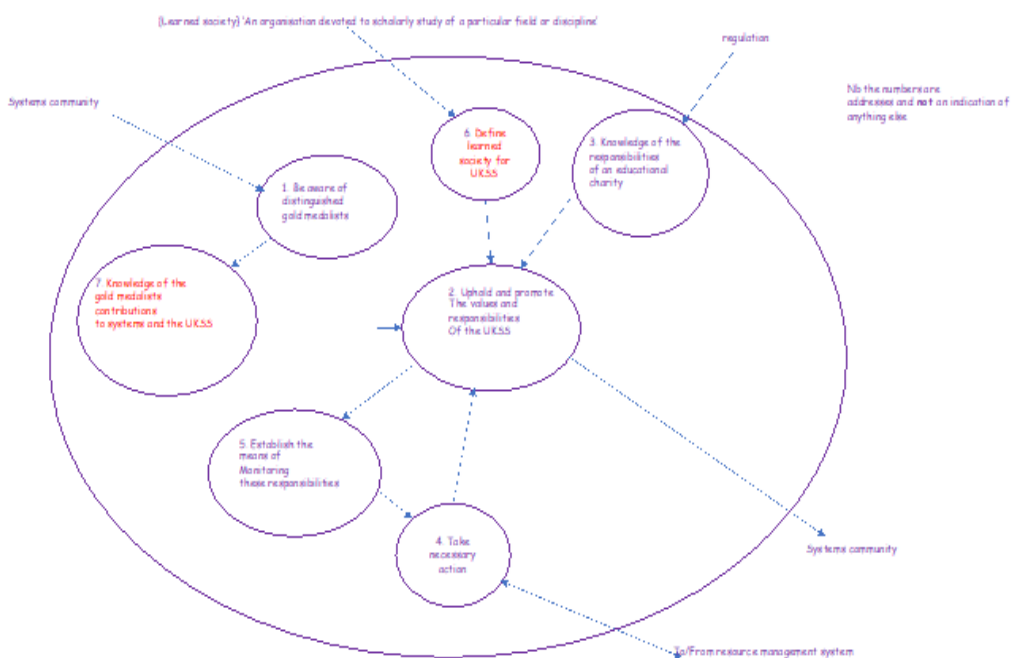


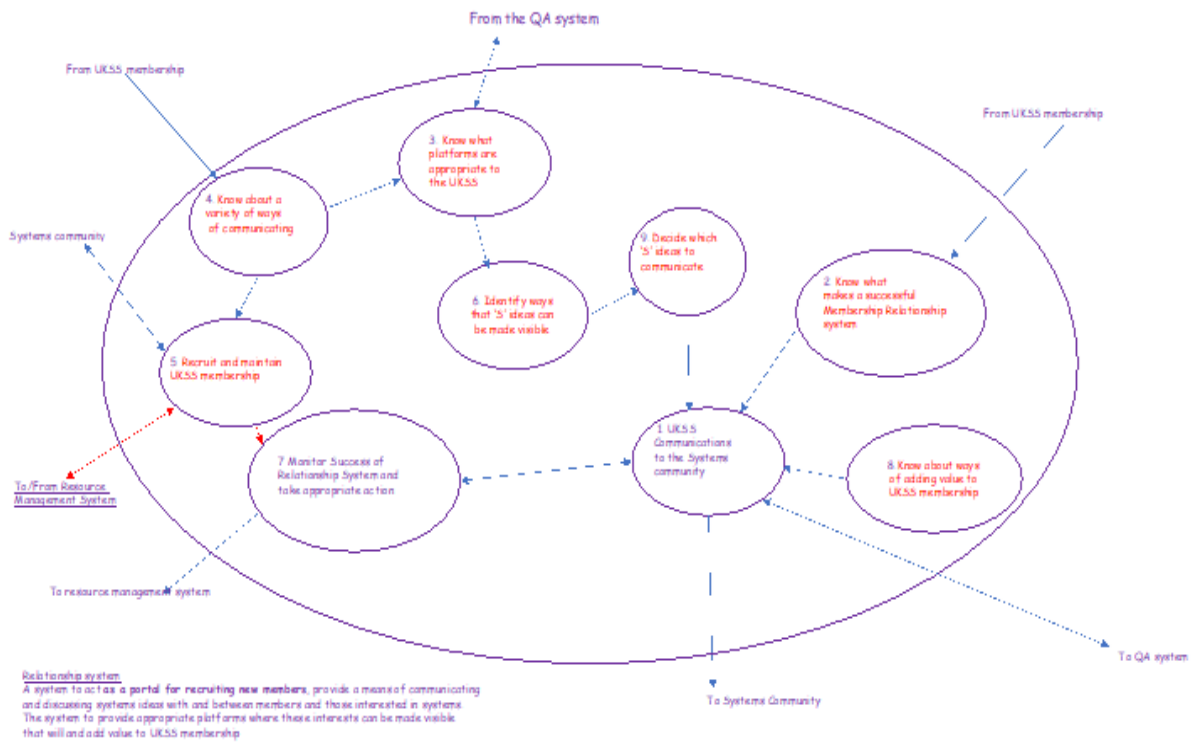
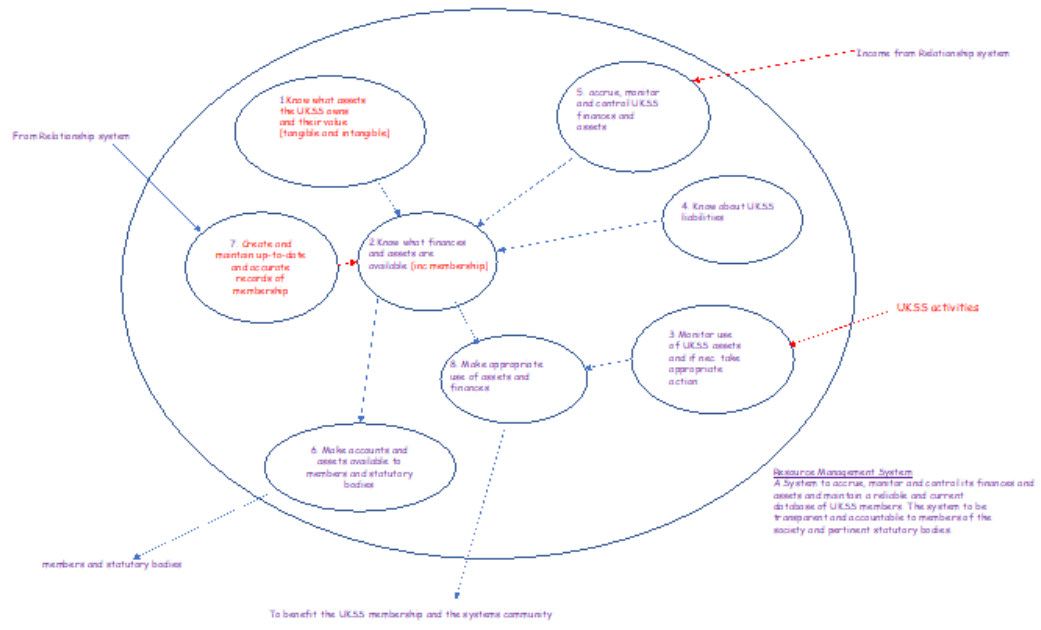
Membership secretary— Relationship system
 A system to provide the UKSS with a means of communicating and discussing systems ideas with and between members and those interested in systems. The system to provide appropriate platforms where these interests can be made visible and add value to UKSS membership



The definitions were circulated, and comments taken into account. This provided the basis of developing activities that seemed necessary in order to fulfil the named system. For those familiar with SSM this is a similar process as writing Root Definitions and developing Conceptual models shown below. (NB whilst AIM and SSM share the same basis and similar activities there are differences – see The Manager’s Guide to Systems Practice, Stowell & Welch, 2012, pp 49-57).

Quality control and Quality Assurance System
 A system to uphold and promote the values of a learned systems society as exemplified by its distinguished gold medalists and through its responsibility as an educational charity





The activities marked in red represent areas that were felt necessitate urgent attention. We welcome any comments that you might have.

Some points to consider:

Despite the advantage of modern communication facilities when it comes down to 'doing things' all societies share the same requisite - 'volunteers'. As you can see from a careful inspection of Systems Maps above there are several activities that would benefit from more help. But finding such colleagues particularly, as things presently stand, is not easy. Everyone is busy as many have had to find and develop new ways of working, a major challenge. We are fortunate in the UKSS as we have a small band of loyal colleagues who keep the Society running, despite the pressures that we have all been under. But as we worked on the review of the society it is clear that a few more willing volunteers would help. Although these activities are carried out by the team presently it is at a cost as many of us have to double up on our roles, which does not always result with the kind of outcome we aim to provide. I outline the key area where an extra volunteer or two will make a big difference.

Relationship System – i.e., UKSS Communications to the Systems community

This role is effectively a membership and marketing role. The person needs to know about the UKSS, Systems [in the broadest sense] and appropriate communication systems. The key activities are:

1. Know how to set up a successful membership relationship system
2. Have ideas how to recruit and maintain UKSS membership
3. Be conversant with a variety of ways of communicating to the systems community and beyond
4. Know what media platforms are appropriate to the UKSS
5. Identify ways that 'S' ideas can be made visible
6. Decide which 'S' ideas to communicate [i.e., know our market]
7. Suggest ways of adding value to UKSS membership.

The above suggests it require more than one Systems colleague.

Prof. Frank Stowell

UKSS International Conference 2021

Advanced notification and the **Call for Abstracts and Papers** for the Virtual 21st United Kingdom Systems Society International Conference

Systems Research in the Digital Age

We will host the Conference using the Zoom Video Communications software

Practitioners and academics first call for abstracts and papers

– Monday 21 June 2021

The Conference has always contemplated the two modalities of participation – face-to-face and virtual. However, given the ongoing COVID situation, the Conference is virtual.

If the current situation changes dramatically, then we will start to accept submissions for in-person participation, and delegates who uploaded an abstract or paper for virtual participation will be able to switch their modality to in-person delivery, if they prefer.

Digital technologies are continuing to revolutionise how organisations operate. The Conference's purpose is to highlight the contributions of current Systems research and how digital technology is changing how we do Systems research. We feel the Conference should appeal to a wide range of consultancy and research topics, such as:

- Culture, environment, change and organisational improvement;
- Policing, disaster management, physical activity and health;
- Retail, social care and housing.

Abstract and paper

We invite delegates to submit a proposal or contribution, which could take the form of:

- An abstract (500 words)
- A full academic paper for [The Systemist](#) (6,000 words maximum and due 3rd May)
- Poster or workshop

An account of a practical application of Systems ideas, e.g., media file, a poster display (200-800 words) or a proposal for a workshop (1,000 words, with as much detail as possible).

Please note, chosen abstracts will appear in the Conference Proceedings.

The EasyChair Submission link is: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=ukss2021>