Annual Report For 2020

Message from the President

It is my pleasure as the President of the Information Professionals Association (IPA) to present our first Annual Report. We are still a new and growing organization, but we have made significant progress over the past year in growing our membership base, increasing support and interest from strategic partners, and building a brand that will help us in our advocacy and long-term sustainability.

Like many of you, our original plans for 2020 were thwarted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and necessity to quarantine. However, the unexpected positive impacts of that shift have been that it has forced our organization to adapt, leverage new venues for interaction, and even opened up new opportunities and new directions for the IPA. For example, rather than focusing on in-person events and conferences that we had traditionally done, we started hosting and participating in more online panel discussions. We have rolled out a new podcast series, *The Cognitive Crucible*, which has expanded outreach and allowed us to highlight and promote discussion on topics of importance to our community. We have built critical new partnerships and engagement with other organizations, like the Applied Research Lab for Intelligence and Security (ARLIS), a University-Affiliated Research Center at the University of Maryland; Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) Alamo Chapter (San Antonio, TX); and the Information Sharing and Analysis Organizations (ISAO), and have expanded our corporate sponsorships. I am very proud of how far we've come as an organization in such a short time, particularly in light of the obstacles the pandemic presented to all member-engaged organizations.

The IPA Annual Report serves as a way to document our progress and stay engaged with our members, so you understand where we've been and the direction we hope to take IPA in the future. As you will see, we have exciting plans for 2021. Our goal remains to be a resource for all of our members, and I hope you will continue to provide us feedback and suggestions so we can better fulfill that role and be a leader in shaping the broader national debate on issues of cognitive security.

Kevin Gates
President
Information Professionals Association

Mission & Vision

The mission of the Information Professionals Association is to provide a forum for information professionals to interact, collaborate, and develop solutions that enhance the _cognitive security_ of the United States and our friends and allies. IPA serves as the nexus for information professionals interested in the application of soft and hard science, advanced analytics, and innovative technologies to advance security, prosperity, shared values, and international order through the free flow of ideas and information. Our vision for serving that purpose is to:

- Serve as an incubator for objective discussions leading to substantive solution development through events, consultation, and professional publications.
- Advocate for the development of innovative capabilities which enable effective engagement in the information environment.
- Nurture private/public partnerships to develop a broad-based professional organization dedicated to successful competition in the information environment.
- Recruit and mentor the next generation of information professionals, leveraging their perspectives to develop innovative solutions to current challenges and prevent future problems.

> **What is Cognitive Security?**
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> Cognitive Security is a field concerned with influence and protection from influence of large groups of media users and consumers both online and offline. Although cognitive security emerges from social engineering and discussions of social deception in the computer security space, it differs in several important respects. Cognitive Security focuses on (1) the exploitation of cognitive biases in large public groups, (2) social influence as an end unto itself and (3) formality and quantitative measurement.

Goals and Accomplishments for 2020

IPA's goals for 2020 included:
- Increase membership and corporate sponsorships
- Improve our outreach and marketing strategy to demonstrate value for our members
- Establish partnerships with related organizations

Major projects and accomplishments
- **_Increase membership:_** At the beginning of 2020, IPA had 40 active members (5 annual, 11 three-year, and 24 lifetime). At the end of 2020, IPA had 111 active members (5 student, 55 annual, 12 three-year, and 39 lifetime). Membership increased the most in April, by 12, and in September, by 13, which aligns with the launch of _The Cognitive Crucible_ podcast series.
- **_Increase Corporate Sponsorship:_** During 2020, our sponsorship increased from one to six. As we enter 2021, our corporate sponsors include: Lexington Solutions Group, Booz Allen Hamilton, SOS International, Northrop Grumman, Parsons Corporation, Sienna Management Solutions, and EdVenture Partners.
- **_Improve our outreach and marketing strategy to demonstrate value for our members:_**
  - _The Cognitive Crucible_ podcast: In September, IPA launched _The Cognitive Crucible_ podcast (https://information-professionals.org/podcasts/cognitive-crucible/) which explores all aspects of our generational challenge -- Cognitive Security. Weekly discussions with information operators, national security thought leaders, scholars, and politicians cover a wide variety of topics related to cognitive security and the information problem, in general. Emerging themes include: the pressing need for partnerships and collaboration, recognizing the information environment as a continuous conflict space with competition below the level of armed conflict, and innovation. The podcast appears to be gaining traction in the military information operations community as an informal professional military education channel. Discussions are intended to be "evergreen," which means that they remain relevant over time. Episodes tend to receive the most downloads during the week the episode is released and taper off over time. It appears that episodes with well-respected military information operations guests tend to perform the best. Guests who actively promote their discussions on LinkedIn tend to have higher download counts. As of the end of 2020, the highest download counts are 229, 213, and 200. We have created an Amazon

affiliation that provides a small revenue stream to defray the costs of *The Cognitive Crucible* podcasts. IPA receives a small percentage of the sales when anyone visiting *The Cognitive Crucible* website purchases products (books, etc.) from Amazon, and we hope that this revenue will grow as *The Cognitive Crucible's* audience increases.

- o Expand our Social Media Presence: Part of our plan to increase membership and revenue includes growing our presence on social media. During 2020, IPA focused primarily on LinkedIn engagement. IPA assesses that LinkedIn is the platform where our target audience is most engaged. Throughout 2020, IPA posted interesting and engaging content relative to cognitive security--including IPA blog content, academic articles, government policy news, and articles related to technological advancements. IPA's consistent social media presence helped grow its LinkedIn follower count from 97 to 525 during 2020. We ask that our members help support that growth by amplifying our message through their own networks, and "liking" or commenting on posts of interest.

- o Social Media Audience Profile: LinkedIn follower demographics suggest that people who interact with IPA tend to be relatively senior personnel in military, defense, and information technology jobs. Business development professionals also tend to engage with IPA LinkedIn content. Finally, the top LinkedIn followers by location are, in order, Washington DC, Tampa FL, New York NY, San Antonio TX, Baltimore MD, and San Francisco CA. This aligns with expected results since these locations have large populations of military, defense, and information technology businesses and government agencies. IPA also hosts a Twitter feed (https://twitter.com/InfoProAssn).

- o Email newsletter: IPA distributes a regular email newsletter to its members and subscribers summarizing recent additions to the blog, *The Cognitive Crucible* podcast, and upcoming events hosted by IPA or featuring IPA members. IPA's email distribution has grown from 127 recipients at the end of 2019 to 250 unique subscribers at the end of 2020. IPA is exploring possible improvements to the email newsletter for 2021.

- *Establish partnerships with related organizations:*
  - o The University of Maryland's Advanced Research Laboratory for Intelligence and Security (ARLIS) is a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) sponsored by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security and has a mission to serve the broader needs of the U.S. government community on matters related to intelligence and security. IPA secured a formal partnership with ARLIS to support development of the Cognitive Security Proving Ground and re-establish the Phoenix Challenge conference and workshop series—DOD's designated platform for collaboration between government, private industry, academia, and foreign partners.
  - o IPA also partnered with the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) Alamo Chapter (San Antonio, TX) for a "Combatting Disinformation in a competitive Information Environment" series of virtual events featuring key leaders and influencers in information and cognitive security. IPA and AFCEA will partner for similar events as we seek to advance knowledge and collaboration across our professional communities.
  - o IPA supported the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) annual Information Operations (IO) symposium as well as other government-run events focused on Global Information Competition.

- *Solidify IPA Leadership Positions:* We filled critical IPA Board positions, adding a new At-Large member (Dr. Juliana Pilon), as well as filling the Vice President position with John Bicknell, a Director for Outreach/Communications with Paula Trimble; and a new Science and Technology Advisor with Dr. Paul Lieber.

The Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes (OoH) is IPA's honorary award which recognizes individuals for exceptional service and contributions in the field of cognitive security and information operations. The Order of Hermes can be awarded to individuals from the military, government civilian or private sector positions (including academia, international or non-governmental organization). Recipients for 2019-202 include:

- **International**
  - o COL Viktoria Kushner, Ukraine Ministry of Defense
  - o COL Andiy Dyda, Ukraine Ministry of Defense
  - o Mr. Yuriy Tsurko, Central Research Institute of Armed Forces
- **Academia**
  - o Dr Hy Rothstein, Naval Postgraduate School
  - o Dr John Arquilla, Naval Postgraduate School

- **Government**
  - o COL (R) Dave Grohoski, Marine Corps IO Center
  - o COL Mike Jackson, USCYBERCOM (TF-A J5)
  - o COL Gerald Dezsofi, 56th TIOG
  - o LTC Nicholas Parker, 51st TIOG
  - o SSG Robert Rollins, 1st IO Command

Financial Summary

The charts below give a snapshot of our financial health that covers the period from 1 November 2019 - 31 October 2020. Corporate sponsorships are an increasing revenue source for IPA compared to previous years, and they will continue to be a focus in 2021 to help us grow and expand the types of outreach and services we will provide.
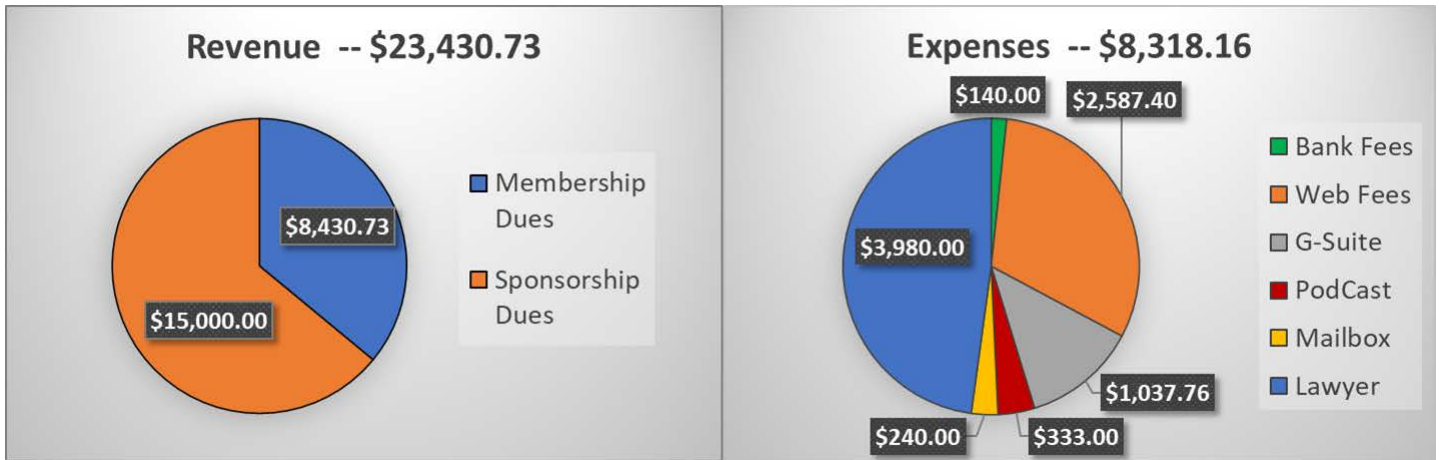
Corporate Sponsorships

IPA welcomes corporate sponsorships and other partnering opportunities which amplify our message with the help of other like-minded groups. Corporate sponsorships also provide the resources to grow the types of services and outreach we hope to provide, including events, mentorship opportunities, and training and certification opportunities. Some of the new services we intend to offer soon will be discussed later in the major projects and goals for 2021 section of this report. We welcome any input or suggestions from members on benefits they might like to see in the future. Our corporate sponsors for 2021 include:

There are several levels of corporate sponsorship, which are highlighted below, as well as the benefits from each level. We will be examining these benefits, as well as for individual membership benefits in 2021. If you are interested in becoming a corporate sponsor at any level, please contact us at: http://infoprof.wpengine.com/contact/.

Sponsorship Level				Benefit
Platinum $25,000	Gold $15,000	Silver $7,250	Bronze $2500	
X	X	X	-	Full-color corporate logo and tagline on all IPA conference literature, banners, and webpage
X	X	X	X	Corporate logo and tagline on IPA website
X	X	X	X	One exclusive episode of *The Cognitive Crucible* podcast annually
X	X	X	X	Listing as a sponsor on all conference literature and banners
X	X	X	X	Access to IPA's "Member Directory"
X	X	X	X	Invitations to public IPA events
X	X	X	X	Invitations to IPA general membership events
X	X	X	X	Presentation opportunities at IPA conferences
X	X	X	-	Option to provide qualified panel members
X	X	X	X	Notification of conference topics and option to nominate
Every other year	-	-	-	Conference moderator position
10	5	5	2	Employee memberships
2	2	2	1	Admission tickets to IPA conferences

Goals, Projects, and Scheduled Events for 2021

- **Goals**
  - Double active individual membership to at least 220 active members
  - Diversify our member demographics beyond our military and government base by actively recruiting academic, industry, media, and research professionals
  - Personally contact former members whose memberships have lapsed and rekindle the relationship
  - Fund outreach on LinkedIn (and possibly other platforms) to potential members who are unaware of IPA
  - Increase corporate sponsorship to 12 active corporate sponsors
  - Grow weekly podcast downloads to 1,000 per week on average
- **Projects**
  - Strengthen our connections with ARLIS: As one of fourteen Department of Defense University-Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs) and the only UARC with a core mission to support the government's security and intelligence communities, ARLIS aims to integrate social and behavior science, AI, and computing for new Human Domain applied research and developmental capabilities—in the cognitive domain.
  - Professional Certification: IPA is in the process of developing a professional certification for cognitive security professionals, to provide a means for demonstrating the comprehensive know-how needed for our community, as well as bolstering professional standards in this emerging discipline. We envision a three-tiered certification system. The first, a practice certification, is for individuals with 3 or less years in their field. A senior certification is intended for those with three to 10 years experience. Finally, a master would be an executive level practitioner, with 10+ years of professional pedigree in his/her discipline. Individuals are encouraged to progress through these stages as professional milestones are accomplished. This year we expect to leverage some training and capstone ideas we develop internally, as well as identifying existing training from other organizations that might be applied for equivalency credit towards the certification goal.
  - IPA Young Professionals program: We are considering establishing a Young Professional Program to support professional development, career support and mentoring for next generation information and cognitive security leaders. We are considering an annual cohort of 10 to 25 participants per year, selected though an application process. This program would focus on both professional/leadership development and technical skills development. We would host focused mentoring and discussion sessions, training through seminar type sessions, and potentially

opportunities to aid IPA members' organizations/companies on short-term projects. We will also create a Young Professionals Alumni program to keep graduates of the program engaged and make them a resource for IPA.

- o In the coming year, IPA plans to offer members the opportunity to create profiles and post resumes on the "members only" section of the IPA website. Members will alternately be able to establish a "bare bones" profile that links to another social media platform (such as LinkedIn) where they already have a profile established. Members will have the option to allow Corporate Sponsors to search their profiles and resumes to aid in their career advancement.
- o During 2021 we also plan to allow our Corporate Sponsors to post job announcements in the "members only" section of the IPA website and provide them access to the profiles of members who "opt in" to this feature.
- **Scheduled Events**
  - o Phoenix Challenge. The original Phoenix Challenge Conference series on IO ran from approximately 2002-2012 and was sponsored by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (OUSD(I)) and the Air Force's 688th IO Wing. The conference brought together IO practitioners from across the military, OSD, allies, academia, and industry to network, exchange ideas, and share information on best practices and new projects. Sessions included everything from presentation of research and program results to operational demonstrations to industry panels. It was the one event where all participants could get an understanding of how their efforts connected to and impacted other activities in the information environment. Phoenix Challenge ceased after the 2012 event due to severe restrictions placed on U.S. government travel and conference participation. ARLIS, in partnership with the IPA and AFCEA's Alamo Chapter will serve as the hosts and organizers of the new Phoenix Challenge conference series. The objective of the conference series is to promote awareness of capabilities and continuing collaboration to solve operational challenges for all aspects of Operations in the Information Environment (OIE) from research and acquisition to operational planning and execution. For this inaugural event, the team will organize an UNCLASSIFIED online conference on 13 April 2021 to "set the scene" for the 14-15 April U.S. Central Command Worldwide IO Conference.

Conclusion

2020 has been a remarkably busy year for IPA. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our individual membership and corporate sponsorship have increased, and we've developed critical partnerships with several like-minded organizations. While we feel that these are significant advances from our position a year ago, we still have a long way to go and we need your help. The United States and our partners continue to face an unprecedented onslaught of disinformation and outright falsehoods that complicate our personal, business, and governmental decision making and threaten many of the institutions that keep our society intact. We ask that you join us in our efforts to broaden public awareness of the cognitive security issues that threaten our society and develop solutions by visiting our website (https://information-professionals.org/), learning more about our mission and activities, and joining IPA today.