Physics Education Research Topical Group (PERTG) NEWSLETTER - WM2023

December 19, 2023

What and why is this?
This is the Winter edition of the biannual newsletter published by PERLOC to keep AAPT’s Physics Education Research Topical Group (PERTG) informed about important news. We think of this newsletter as taking on the role of the announcements historically made in the existing RiPE meeting and PERTG town hall, allowing those meetings to be more interactive and useful. In addition to streamlining those meetings, the newsletter will allow people who were unable to attend the AAPT meeting to stay informed about what is going on in the community.

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This is a new section to the PERTG Newsletter intended as an opportunity for transparency about the initiatives and tasks PERLOC has been working on. Below is a list of initiatives PERLOC has been tackling recently. There is additional information about these efforts in the PERLOC Announcements section below.

- Worked with PERC organizers, AAPT staff, and PERC Proceedings Editors to plan PERC 2022 and 2023, including managing the transition back to an in-person meeting after 2 years of virtual
- Awarded PERTG mini-grants for the first half of the year
- Continued to support a staff member for PERC proceedings
- Continued to sustainably implement accessible conferences practices (e.g., accessibility accountability liaison, tips for accessible presentations) and formalized the Working Group on Conference Accessibility (WGCA)
- Continued to support several high-workload volunteer roles as paid activities (including creating formal job descriptions, statements of work, budget line items), beginning with PERC organizers and PERC Proceedings editors.
- Surveyed the community regarding several large-scale structural issues within the community

PERLOC Announcements

Money Matters

PERTG expenses include mini-grant awards and costs associated with PERC and PERC Proceedings. The vast majority of PERTG's revenue comes from dues and PERC registration fees. In recent years, expenses and revenues were relatively stable and PERTG maintained a balanced budget and carried a modest surplus. Having the last two PERCs being virtual affected both revenue and expense, creating some uncertainty for the budget. Despite this, we ended 2020 with a balanced budget. For 2021, PERLOC committed funds to support the PERC Proceedings Editors and Organizers, and provide administrative support to the Editors. However, we did not increase PERC registration fees and, so, drew down the surplus considerably.

We continued this support for the PERC Organizers and Proceedings Editors into 2022 and offset these costs by increasing the registration fees for the conference while keeping PERTG dues constant. Budgets for SM 2022 have not been fully reconciled, so it is unclear if this setup is sustainable at this point. Recognizing that the increased registration fee put strain on certain community members, PERLOC is continuing to consider how to maintain a balanced budget moving forward. However, the reality is that PERLOC must either increase its budget (by maintaining the higher registration or increasing dues) or stop providing financial support to at least one of the following: mini-grants, the PERC organizers, or the PERC editorial team.
**PERTG MiniGrants**

This year, in an attempt to control the budget and accommodate PERLOC's increased spending to support the Organizers and Editors, PERTG MiniGrants were only solicited and awarded for the spring, primarily to support travel to the AAPT/PERC conferences for early career community members. A list of awardees will be available on the PERTG website. Keep a lookout for the Spring 2023 MiniGrant solicitation on our website and through the COMMUNITIES platform. Whether PERLOC moves back to a bi-annual solicitation or continues to solicit only for the spring semester will be contingent on the constraints of the evolving budget.

**Winter Meeting 2023 Town Hall**

The PERTG town hall for the winter meeting 2023 will be held on January 16th at 12-2 PM Pacific. During the town hall, PERLOC will present results from the recent survey sent out to the community following discussion at the 2022 summer meeting. An impressive nearly 200 community members at least partially completed the survey; PERLOC thanks all of the respondents for their time and thoughtful feedback.

Here is the Zoom link for the PERTG town hall:  
https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/99648229322

**PERC 2023 Organization Team**

The PERC 2023 theme is “Strengthening the PER Community of practice” and the core organization team includes Rebecca Lindell and Mary Urquhart. The conference will explore the needs, wants, and desires for members of this community, and will spotlight overcoming barriers to belonging to the PER community of practice.

PERLOC is actively seeking proposals for the PERC 2024 meeting. We are currently seeking community members who are interested in contributing to the organizing of the PERC 2024 meeting and conference themes that are of interest to the community. We plan to resend the call for proposals after the 2023 Winter meeting; but, if you are interested, have a theme suggestion, or have additional questions or concerns, please contact PERLOC's PERC liaison: Raymond Zich (rlzich@gmail.com).

**PERC 2023 Proceedings Deadlines**

The PERC 2023 meeting is scheduled for July 19-20, 2023, which is substantially earlier than in years prior to 2022. This means that the PERC Proceedings submissions will be due in mid- to late-May 2023. This is not a change in the editorial process deadline, but instead a response to the earlier date of the conference. Please see the PERC website or follow PERTG on AAPT COMMUNITIES for additional details about the conference and proceedings deadlines as they become available.
**Funding Invited Presenters**

When organizing a session, you might want to invite a speaker from outside the AAPT community and want to help fund their participation (travel costs to the conference, offer an honorarium, etc). If you are inviting a speaker to AAPT who has not been a member for 5 years, then they receive complimentary full meeting registration. For PERC, there are no specific funds set aside to help fund invited speakers. (Remember, an attendee at PERC must also register for at least one day of AAPT.) However, MiniGrants are available through both PERTG and APS GPER. You will need to be a member of the funding organization in order to apply. Both MiniGrants have “organizer strands” that are ideal for helping fund invited speakers at conferences. If you plan to invite speakers and request these funds, make sure to account for all of the costs they might incur!

**Working Group on Conference Accessibility (WGCA)**

Since 2019, PERLOC has been working with external consultants to assess the accessibility of the PERC conference with the goal of increasing access and support for all people to attend PERC. In 2019, we coordinated with an external consultant to survey the community about the state of accessibility of the PERC. We generated a list of accessible conference planning practices and identified conference aspects to target time and resources toward.

In 2020, the working group began implementing accessible conference practices including: a) hired an accessibility accountability liaison to support participants in accessing accommodations and to keep the working group accountable to our targets; b) created and disseminated best practices for accessible presentations to participants; c) led the inaugural Physics Education and Accessible Meeting Planning workshop for PER community leaders; and d) began creating a strategic plan.

Also in 2020, the working group expanded their focus to include the AAPT summer and winter meetings in addition to the PERC. This partnership includes cost sharing between AAPT and PERLOC and expanded the working group to include AAPT stakeholders. The current list of working group members includes: Erin Scanlon, Adrienne Traxler, Stephanie Williams, Rebecca Lindell, Constance Doty, Daryl McPadden, Daniel Sharkey, Tiffany Hayes, and Cerena Cantrell. We were approved for AAPT working group status by AAPT’s board of directors, and we are working to create a website to share the working group’s progress and accessibility resources.

In 2021, we hired Dr. Linn Jorgenson ([Disability Consulting and Training](#)) as an external consultant to assist us with creating a policy for processing accommodation requests, creating a finer-grained strategic plan, and planning inclusive and accessible meetings. In 2022, we continued working with Dr. Jorgenson to help PERLOC and AAPT sustainably implement these accessible practices, plan training for the community related to accessibility/disability, and to guide policy making.
If you are interested in joining the working group on conference accessibility, or would like to learn more, please reach out to us at: atraxler@ind.ku.dk. All community members are welcome to join (e.g., students, staff, faculty, high school teachers)!

**Preliminary results and analysis of PERLOC SM 2022 Survey**

As described briefly above, PERLOC, in response to requests from the community, conducted a survey around three key issues following the Summer AAPT meeting. These issues included:

1. Communication with the PERTG community now that the PERTG listserv has been retired by AAPT,
2. The structure and timeline of PERC deadlines given the double-confidential review and increased editorial workload,
3. The timing and connection of the Physics Education Research Conference with respect to national professional organizations.

Detailed discussion of the results of this survey will be reserved for the WM 2023 Town Hall meeting, and will be summarized and posted online for community members to review at their convenience following the WM 2023.

Preliminarily, PERLOC can report some degree of consensus regarding issues 1) and 3). We found that nearly a third of the survey respondents were not aware that the PERTG Listserv was no longer functioning. Please ensure your professional contacts are aware that AAPT has chosen to retire all listservs and now routes ALL communication through the COMMUNITIES Platform. This is now the ONLY method of communication that PERLOC has with the PERTG membership. **Only active AAPT and PERTG members will have access to communications from PERLOC to the community.** Should your membership in either group laps, you will lose access to PERLOC and PERTG communications.

Community members with concerns or feedback regarding the COMMUNITIES Platform are encouraged to express their concerns to AAPT directly, while PERLOC will continue to provide a conduit for PERTG member feedback to AAPT on this issue as well.

With respect to issue 3), consensus from the community appears to be that PERC should maintain its connection to AAPT via either the summer or winter meeting. Variations on opinions exist with respect to the timing being before the Summer meeting, after the Summer meeting, or attached to the winter meeting; though it is notable that the only option that was not actively opposed by any respondents (indicated by selecting “This option is pretty much unacceptable to me”) was the option to maintain the status quo (PERC runs the 1.5 days after AAPT).

Additional discussion of the survey results around issues 2) and 3) will be presented during the [Winter meeting town hall](#).
Community Announcements

Join PERCoGS!
If you are a current or future physics education graduate student interested in getting involved or staying in touch with the Physics Education Research graduate community, please consider joining the Physics Education Research Consortium of Graduate Students (PERCoGS). You can learn more on our webpage, and join for free here.

PERCoGS seeks to bring graduate students together by hosting panels and topical discussions at the AAPT summer and winter meetings, as well as maintaining an active community on slack where funding strands, job opportunities, and virtual symposiums are posted regularly. We look forward to meeting new members! Current and future graduate students are welcome to join.

How can people get involved?
We’re so glad you asked! There are multiple ways PERTG community members can get involved including:

- Joining one of the working groups
  - Contact the current PERLOC chair, Rachel Henderson (hende473@msu.edu)
- Attend the facilitated conversations about the structure and future of PERTG community
  - Additional information is forthcoming
- Join PERLOC
  - Nominations will open in late summer/early fall 2023
- Become a PERC Proceedings Editor
  - Nominations will open in early Spring 2023
  - Please contact Rachel Henderson (hende473@msu.edu) with questions about the PERC Editor role, workload, and possible risks/rewards
- Become a PERC Organizer
  - Proposals for PERC 2024 themes will open in spring/summer 2023
  - Please contact Raymond Zich (rlzich@gmail.com) with questions about the PERC organizer role, workload, and possible risks/rewards
- Follow PERTG in AAPT COMMUNITIES for opportunities to get involved

Thank you to all PERTG members for your active support!
Appendix: About PERLOC

What is PERLOC?

PERLOC is the leadership body of the PER Topical Group of the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), founded in 2006. PERLOC was formed to address a growing need for communication and decision-making structures within the PER community, and a desire to promote and advance PER within AAPT and beyond. Many of the constituents of our organization are committed teachers (at universities/colleges, at high/middle/elementary schools, and in informal science learning settings) and/or scholars that research physics education across these many settings.

Who are we?

- Eugenia Etkina (2023-2026)
- Nekeisha Johnson (2023-2026)
- Lauren Barth-Cohen (2022-2025)
- Sujata Krishna (2022-2026)
- Rebecca Rosenblatt (2021-2024)
- Rachel Henderson (2021-2024) PERLOC Co-Chair
- Raymond Zich (2022-2025)
- Sathya Guruswamy (tentative, 2023) Ex-officio/RiPE Chair

What does PERLOC do?

**We find and support PERC Organizers:** PERLOC solicits proposals for the annual PER Conference and from these applications chooses the PERC theme and associated PERC organizing team. PERLOC works to maintain institutional memory from one PERC organizing team to the next, and assists the PERC organizing team in coordinating with AAPT to successfully run PERC.

**We find and support PERC Proceedings Editors:** PERLOC solicits and selects Editors for the PERC Proceedings and works with the PERC Editors to refine its operation. From the set of highly reviewed PERC proceedings papers, PERLOC selects a few “notable papers” to highlight to the community.

**We handle PERTG’s money and award MiniGrants:** PERLOC coordinates with AAPT to collect and then spend the membership dues that it collects. A significant portion of these membership dues are fed back into community activities through the PERTG MiniGrant program.

**We help maintain and grow the PER community:** PERLOC periodically reflects on the health and well-being of our community (such as considering appropriate actions that should follow the RiPE social activities survey). PERLOC also communicates and
coordinates with: (a) its members (through the PERTG listserv, and updating our web presence on Compadre), (b) other AAPT committees, and (c) GPER within American Physical Society.

PERLOC’s guide to acronyms

- AAPT = American Association of Physics Teachers
- PERTG = Physics Education Research Topical Group (AAPT members who, as a topical group, assist the advancement, dissemination, and application of knowledge of physics education research)
- PERLOC = Physics Education Research Leadership and Organizing Council (A committee of elected representatives who has the general charge of the affairs of the Topical Group.)
- RiPE = Research in Physics Education (an area committee within AAPT appointed by AAPT Board)
- PERGS = Physics Education Research Graduate Students
- PERCoGS = PER Consortium of Graduate Students (a committee of elected representatives who has the general charge of the affairs of the PER Graduate Students).
- APS = American Physical Society
- GPER = Topical Group on Physics Education Research (a group within the APS whose objective is the advancement and diffusion of knowledge concerning the learning and teaching of physics).
- PERC = Physics Education Research Conference (overseen by PERLOC, but organized separately by volunteer organizers each year). It has conference proceedings that are organized by 3 volunteer editors (who serve 3-year terms).