

VICE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT
To the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Inc

July 2008 to June 2009

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WEBSITE UPGRADE

I reported at the 2008 AGM on investigations into the upgrade of the ASHA website to allow for a range of features to streamline administration and improve member benefits.

The membership voted to support the creation of a new website using an American webhosting and membership management package at a cost of \$2,500 USD with ongoing costs of \$170 USD per month.

Shortly thereafter, the global financial crisis struck and the value of AUD plummeted making this option far too costly and unstable in the long-term.

So it was back to the drawing board and after scope cheaper overseas and other local options, the Committee decided to contract a Sydney-based web design company called The Web Showroom. While do not provide a 'membership management' package per se, their content management system offered an excellent basis to adapt our needs to fit an established, user-friendly web hosting package with ongoing support. In this respect, they presented the middle ground between the all-in-one American membership management package and a fully customised, one-off build by an independent web designer.

While the initial cost of \$3,995 was high, the on-going hosting costs are much lower, being \$49.95 per month.

The site build began in March and after many trials and much tribulation, the site was launched on 18 August. I'd like to thank all those who helped with the build by supplying text and images and scanning old documents—in particular Martin Gibbs and Mac North.

THE NEW SITE

In addition to an all new look, there is much new content:

- Volumes 1-25 of *Australasian Historical Archaeology* (vols 21-25 are available to member only)
- A special section for book reviews from *AHA*
- Complete archive of newsletters
- PDFs of out-print publications from the occasional papers and other series
- A news module for current new items

- Updated page content for most pages
- More information about past committees
- New sections on 'What is Historical Archaeology' and 'Historical Archaeology' with information for the general public

New features include:

- Online payments¹ for membership subscriptions and books
- 'My Membership' section for member to check and update their contact details
- Secure pages for members to access protected content

On the administrative side, the benefits include:

- Much more efficient email broadcasting
- Centralised management of members list with 'live' information for the secretary, treasurer and admin officer
- A user-friendly web management system that you don't need to be a web designer to use

PROBLEMS

Unsurprisingly, the process of adapting our customised membership database into The Web Showroom's general web-based content management system required some compromises. While they were able to adapt their systems to meet our special needs for most issues, some were not possible. The issue of greatest concern is the management of Household memberships. In our own database, we were able to record the individual names and email addresses of both household members. In the new system, this is problematical and only one email address can be stored for both members.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

As will all 'live' content, the website is still a work-in-progress. There are more publications to scan and new content to upload. In addition, The Web Showroom package has other features which will improve other areas of society business, including:

MULTIPLE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Members could have the option to purchase a three-year or five-year membership. This may be attractive to members who don't like the hassle of renewing each year (even though it will be much easier now with online payments!), but aren't up for the life membership
- It may be feasible to offer a small discount (e.g. 5%) to reflect the savings in administration costs—subject to a thorough review by the treasurer

¹ As at 20 August only Paypal payments are accepted. Secure credit-card payments will be available soon.

NEWSLETTER

- Online submission of articles and images
- Preparation online (to streamline formatting)
- Delivery of the newsletter in html

EMAIL DISCUSSION LIST

- Integration of the email discussion list into the new site to streamline the management of new email addresses
- Alternatively, the email discussion list could be managed as an online blog, accessible to members only

COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

- Online submission of nomination forms for committee positions using the secure members only section of the site
- Online endorsement of nominees using the members only section of the site
- Online submission of proxy forms, again using the members only section of the site

In all cases, the act of logging into the site with the member's unique username and password would be deemed as sufficient proof of a) the member's current status and b) consent to nominate, endorse a nominee or appoint a proxy.

The submission of nomination forms would require a minor amendment to the constitution (see below). The membership supports this motion, the system could be trialled in 2010.

The submission of proxy forms would require a more considered amendment to the constitution and should be reviewed following the trial of the nomination submissions, should it go ahead.

Please note there is no proposal to conduct online elections, which would require a major change to the 'secret ballot' principles contained within the constitution.

RECOMMENDATION

That the following motions be put to the 2009 AGM:

1. That ASHA offers multiple year subscriptions, effective from 1 July 2010
2. Subject to 1, that the Treasurer investigates the feasibility of a small discount on multiple-year subscriptions
3. Amend section 9.8 of the constitution from:

9.8 A nomination shall name the candidate and the position for which election is sought and shall be signed by not less than 2 members.

To:

9.8 A nomination shall name the candidate and the position for which election is sought and shall be signed **or otherwise endorsed, to the satisfaction of the Returning Officer**, by not less than 2 members.

4. Subject to 3, trial the online submission of nomination forms for committee positions using the secure members-only section of the website in 2010.