

8. Publicity Officer's Report 2022 (for QRA AGM 2023)

In 2022, the Publicity Officer compiled and edited E-mail Newsletters to QRA members approximately once a week. These remain a popular and effective means of advertising positions, events and news across the membership and are typically scheduled for 3pm on Fridays.

Website redesign (and associated systems)

The significant task this year has been initiation of a much-needed, complete overhaul of the QRA website and associated systems. The Committee decided in May to divorce itself from the previous web-management company (Focal Strategy, currently still operating the existing website), after a deterioration in communications and lack of action from the start of the pandemic in 2020.

Web redesign is a large undertaking and an important one to get right given reliance on the website and associated systems in running the QRA today. Key issues with the current web systems are:

- Unresponsive web management company
- Inability for executive committee members to (easily) change content
- Steep learning curves for handover of executive roles (e.g. most roles last ~3 years)
- Issues managing and updating online shop / delivery costs
- Major issues with membership details and updates, especially:
 - Does not sync with Mailing List used in MailChimp
 - Contains unresolved bugs associated with login and membership renewal
- No system for submitting or logging grant applications online

The aim is to have a new website that is:

- Simple and clean
- Sustainable, requiring minimal technical upkeep
- Easily transferrable to new web support team, if required
- Fully editable and simple to hand-over between publicity officers (3-year terms)
- Editable by multiple executive committee members
- Able to integrate membership database and mailing list

Importantly, the web systems need to manage:

- **Login for members** to keep membership details and payments up-to-date and to access members-only systems
- **Online shop** with **secure online payment** linked to bank accounts for selling hard copy field / technical guides, and for membership payments / renewal / direct debit:
 - Current system is Stripe integration (not currently set up for Direct Debit initiation)
 - Must meet EU regulations
- **Membership database** integrating Login, Member Details, Membership & Renewal and Mailing List (below):
 - Current system contains bugs, does not sync well with membership status, and does not integrate with MailChimp Mailing List
 - Must meet GDPR regulations
- **Mailing List** system that updates with Membership database, preferably synced to existing, external MailChimp account:
 - Must sync with membership status (new members added, lapsed removed)
- **Events listing** system for meetings:
 - Basic dates, listings, etc. Does not need to include registration / payment system as these are generally hosted externally
- **Trusted Proxy Server link** so that logged-in members can access full Journal of Quaternary Science. This link has been established in the existing website and can be co-ordinated with the Wiley web team.
- **PDF document hosting** for viewing / download and archiving
- **Basic forms system** for Grant Applications (text responses to questions, archived)

- Not essential; could use external forms system if required

There is also an intention to include an **open access system to archive Quaternary Newsletter**.

Timeline

May 2022 Outline specification: approved by Executive Committee prior to seeking quotes.

Jun 2022 Detailed specification: outlining our current system and requirements for redesign; confirmed by President and Secretary.

Jul 2022 Tenders: Five potential design companies were contacted for quotes. One company who provided a quote in 2018 of £4,800 (+ hosting + support) did not respond. Of the four who did, two arranged meetings with the Publicity Officer to discuss requirements and then provided quotes:

- LUV design: £8,950 + annual licenses + plugins + hosting (recommended by BGS)
- Brightminded: min. £40,000 (recommended by BES)

Both companies were impressive during discussion and prompt with communication, offering appealing design ideas. The significant difference in price largely reflected the use of publicly-available plug-ins versus bespoke systems.

Aug 2022 QRA Coms and Pubs Sub-Committee Meeting: Progress confirmed.

Sep 2022 Executive Committee approval: Both quotes discussed by whole committee. LUV selected as redesign company because they offered a substantially cheaper quote and because preference was for a more portable website (not bespoke) based on publicly-available systems.

Oct–Nov 2022 Discovery phase: Key Executive Committee members met with LUV team to initiate and discuss design process. Since then, the following stages have been completed: Identify content layout / Navigation and labelling / Information analysis / Creating lists of user types and browsing behaviour / Contact with Wiley for JQS integration / Member login demo / Project preparation

Next phases

- **UX/UI design:** Theme research / Design concepts / Quality assurance / Review meeting / Refinement
- Client review / Client sign off
- **Development:** Developer preparation / Theme installation / Plugin installation / Content template key pages set up / Refinement / QA / Client review / Client sign off
- **Content migration:** Execute content migration and input / Refinement / Accessibility QA / Functionality QA / UAT (user acceptance testing) / Client final review / Pinpoint launch date / Sign off for launch
- **Website deployment and support:** Launch preparations / Final QA and UAT / Launch (TBD) / Post launch health monitoring / Tutorial documentation preparation / Tutorial workshop / Project handover / Commence support SLA

Feb 10 2023 Scheduled completion

Publicity Officer tenure ends at January 2023 AGM. Current officer will hand-over the role, including website redesign process shortly after that time.

Christopher Darvill, Publicity Officer

12/2022