

WEBMASTER'S REPORT - 2010

This year has seen a re-launch of the Societies website in an attempt to become a more interactive portal for Society members.

The goal of the website is to provide Society members with a range of members only based features while continuing to provide the casual visitor with a full flavour of what the Society is about and what we do.

Among the new members only sections we have introduced individual user galleries where members can showcase their images. Each member has full control over the gallery content and if the guidelines are followed should be able to have 20 to 30 images. The user galleries have had reasonable success this season with 31 members uploading images to their own galleries and it would be nice for this to grow over the summer. The actual number of images on the site has risen from 280 last year to approx 800 this year which includes user galleries, competition winners and of course the exhibition winners.

We have also introduced community forums where members can get the latest information about club activities, as well as discuss any aspect of the club, its activities and indeed any photographic subject. All major areas of the Society have a presence in the forums. For example the Panels group, the AV group and others all have dedicated forums to provide and discuss relevant topics. This unfortunately has had only a small contribution from members this season and we will be pushing this next season with some tutorial sessions as the forums really can bring members with common interests together and facilitate a more active Society.

All paid up members are entitled to register an account on the site and are encouraged to do so. We currently have 90 registered members. We have also had many attempted registrations from bogus members and spammers, which we were able to spot fairly easily and reject. An unfortunate sign of the times, but did make admin life more interesting.

The main driver behind the re-launch was for the Society to have an online entry system for the Annual exhibition and this, despite one or two teething issues, was, I feel, a success. Almost all entries were presented to the exhibition secretary from the website and most paid automatically using the provided PayPal facility. We have learned lessons from this and will improve this system over the coming seasons.

A measure of websites effectiveness is given by the number visits it receives and the number of pages a visitor looks at, and in past years the webmaster has gathered these for the AGM. Unfortunately this is not so easy this year as the amount for work being carried out over the year has artificially influenced the figures. Just for the record, however, last year the average number of hits was 8372 per month. This years figure has been recorded at around 18,000 per month since the re-launch, but it's difficult to separate the admin access from user's access.

What hasn't changed is the diverse range of countries from where the site has been accessed: the UK and US being the biggest as normal while we also had visits from places such as Romania, Ukraine, Japan, Thailand, Argentina and Israel but just 2 visits from Ireland.

Most site visits are from those running Windows, or Apple Mac computers but we are also getting an increased number of visits from mobile devices, another sign of the times. As far as browsers go Internet explorer has taken the lead back from Firefox this year at 52% versus 33%.

Over the coming summer and next season we will continue to improve the site and introduce new features to complement and extend the Societies programme so watch this space.