GUIDE TO MANAGING HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Involving People

Communication – email, forums and mc2

The Internet has provided a variety of opportunities for communication and networking.

Email
All groups should have an email address as email is now an accepted method of communication by most people. A major advantage of email is that an email can be sent at any time and the recipient reads and answers the email when it is convenient. The original sender reads the reply when they next log on to the computer. This is a great improvement on the telephone system where a message can be left on an answering machine and the recipient leaves a message on another answering machine to acknowledge receiving the original phone call.

A number of web email accounts that can be accessed from any computer are now available including Hotmail – www.hotmail.com, Yahoo Mail – http://au.yahoo.com and G-mail – www.google.com.au. Accounts can be established using the name or initials of the society as the user name, rather than the name of an individual. It is important to keep a copy of the user name and password in a safe place.

The organisation does not have to have Internet access to have an email account if a member of the group is prepared to monitor emails from home.

An Internet resource, About.com – http://email.about.com/, is a good place to investigate for information on using email.

Emails are correspondence. Copies of emails relating to the historical society should be included in the correspondence at society meetings.

With email, remember there is email etiquette. It is always advisable to read through an email before using the Send button to dispatch the email. Because it is so easy to 'dash off an email' emails can convey a 'tone' which may not have been the intention of the sender. Most email programs have a facility for saving a draft of an email so it is possible to read it through again later and make changes if needed before sending. An About.com article on the 20 most important rules of email netiquette – http://email.about.com/od/emailnetiquette/tp/core_netiquette.htm – provides useful reminders for sending user friendly email communication.

Email programs include a batch email option to enable one email to be sent to a number of people at once. Some email programs restrict the number of names in a batch so it may be necessary to read the Help section of the specific program for information on how to do this. This facility can be useful for sending a message to group members or circulating a newsletter by email or for alerting members that the latest copy of the email is online.

Attachments – documents, images, spreadsheets – can also be sent by email. It is advisable, however, to restrict the size of a file sent by email. Some email programs have size restrictions for attachments. Large files take a long time to send and the person receiving the email may not have enough space in their In Box to receive the incoming email with the attachment.

Only send attachments that can be opened by the receiver. Some word processing programs use file extensions that are not recognized or cannot be opened on all computers. Documents ending in .doc are usually OK though some early versions of Microsoft Word cannot open Word documents saved in later versions. From Microsoft Office 2007, Word documents are saved with a docx extension that will not open in earlier versions of Word unless a special program has been downloaded and installed from the Microsoft website. Files created in Word 2007 or Word2010 can be saved using the .doc extension so if sending email documents as attachments it may be advisable to save the file using the .doc extension. Files saved with .rtf extension should be able to be opened in any word processing program. Pdf documents can also be sent by email. The receiver, however, will need a program such as Adobe Acrobat Reader to read the document.

Two warnings: Never send an attachment that has not been scanned by virus protection software and never open an email, especially if there is an attachment, when you do not know the sender or are suspicious of the content.

Forums
Networking opportunities have increased with the advent of electronic.

An early form of Internet communication was the Bulletin Board where Person A posted a message and Person B would post a response. To keep up to date with messages on the bulletin board it was necessary to regularly log on to the site to read the messages.

Forums provide the opportunity for members of an online group to post and reply to messages but the original message and responses are emailed to all members of the forum group. Forum messages and responses are also usually accessible on a site in the same way as the former bulletin boards or have an archive facility where all the posts on a topic can be viewed together.

A number of organisations provide forums as part of their websites where members exchange views on topics of interest to members. Members subscribe (fill in an online form normally providing name and email address and password) to join a forum. As members they can then read and can post messages.

My Connected Community (mc²) – http://mc2.net.au – provides a collection of Internet based networking tools for the free use of community groups – a forum being one of the tools. Members of mc² groups automatically receive messages posted in the forum unless they elect not to receive messages.

The forum can be used to ask questions, provide information on a topic of interest to group members, publicise a book, offer items no longer needed for use by other groups, provide information about grants or awards etc. Forums provide a great

resource for sharing information. Sometimes there will be a great response to a topic in the forum with a number of people from all parts of Victoria sharing their views on a topic. At other times there may be no response. This does not matter as forums function as information resources as well as a discussion opportunity. I often meet people who receive messages from the History Victoria Support Group mc² forum who tell me that they had taken discussed information provided in one of the at a committee meeting.

The forum on My Connected Community sites also has a search box allowing the user to search for groups of posts on a particular topic.

My Connected Community
Using the features provided in My Connected Community (mc²) is easy. You just need to be able to type in a box and press a button to send the messages.

Mc² is more than a forum. Apart from the forum, other resources provided in mc² groups include:
- a links page providing links to useful web sites
- an events page where members can publicise the activities of their group
- an images section and
- a section for sharing files of interest to group members.
Any member of the mc² group can add material to the mc².

A section of the RHSV website – www.historyvictoria.org.au/connected.htm – provides information on joining mc² plus a list of mc² groups relating to local history.

Mc² groups you might consider joining include:
- *History Victoria Support group mc²* containing information relevant for members of historical societies
- *Computers and cataloguing mc²* for those particularly interested in computer related projects and
- *Royal Historical Society of Victoria mc²* for information relating to Victoria's history – this is an excellent site to post information about forthcoming events for your group.