**Websites**

YOUR WEBSITE should be the first place members go to find out what’s happening in the organ world.

1. All of the information that appears in your print newsletter should appear first online. Begin the discussion of how much longer you will print and mail a newsletter, recognizing that that decision is just a matter of time.
2. Job availability and job security are paramount issues to young organists. Keep those items in a prominent place on your webpage.
3. Your website should focus on member needs and vs. chapter business and AGO boilerplate.
4. Invite a response. Ask members to vote on their favorite chapter program, recommend recordings or YouTube videos, etc. Seek engagement of web visitors.
5. Change it up. Website content should be constantly changing.
6. Does your website look tired? What message is it communicating? Identify someone in your chapter that has the skills to update the site on a regular basis.

*Creating A Chapter Website*

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There is almost no reason for a chapter to have to pay to have a website aside from paying for a domain name and a hosting program. As of today February 2014, a domain name can be registered for about $10 and a website hosted for about $10 a month. A domain name like www.agochattanooga.com is your address on the web, and the website is the pages that people see when they type in the domain name. These are two separate things. Domain names are permanent as long as you pay the annual fee. The website can be “hosted”, meaning kept available for people to see when they type in the domain name, by any number of “hosting providers”, including some free ones, which I recommend. Within every chapter there will be someone who is able to create a simple website easily for free. Find that person. A guild member will do a much better job of creating a website that serves the guild than many professional website designers whose experience may not be in the organ field. There will be those that want to have a professionally designed, comprehensive site and that’s possible. But first, visit some chapter websites and see what you find important and necessary to have on your site. Which pages get the most traffic? Which pages are just there to satisfy a member’s own personal interests?

Four basic questions are likely to be answered on any chapter’s website:

1. How do I contact someone about the Guild?
2. When and where are the meetings and programs?
3. What jobs are open?
4. Who is available to substitute?

This is what your membership and the public want to learn from your website and these are your most important pages. All the other possible pages, including lists of organs in the area and that sort of thing can be useful, but you must cover the basic four points of interest first and avoid expensive charges for the creation of databases and web pages that do not serve to directly promote the chapter. It is important to build the website so that it works to answer people’s questions about the chapter and to invite them in. The second goal of the site might be to provide information just for guild members, such as a private members directory, non-public chapter events, officer contact information, etc.

Make sure that as board members change, the board member in charge of the website transfers the contact person information as officers change. All too often a member volunteers to sign up for the domain name and then creates the site, leaving the board with little or no control over the site. This can result in a website that is out of date, inaccessible or a web domain that leads nowhere. The chapter has to own and control the domain name and run the website to avoid interruption of service.

**Utilizing the AGO Website to Create a Free Chapter Web Page**

The national AGO website (http://www.agohq.org) will host a chapter web page for free. It’s not a full website, but you can put up as much content as you like. Here is an example of a chapter website hosted by AGO headquarters: <http://www.agohq.org/chapters/fortlauderdale> . The new national website was created using WordPress, a widely-used blogging and Content Management System (CMS). Chapter webmasters would be given a WordPress user-id and password to access their chapter page. The page would be set up with the standard chapter template, but the chapter is not required to use the template if the webmaster has enough WordPress or HTML skills to create his or her own page. A video on how to set up a chapter page in WordPress can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/84340990> .

For more information about creating a chapter web page on the agohq.org domain contact Bill Valentine at bill.valentine@agohq.org .