

Guidance for members of the Craft and Royal Arch on the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web for communicating and informing

1 General

The Board of General Purposes has recognised that the Internet can be a major tool in the process of better informing the public about Freemasonry and disseminating information to members of the Craft. It also recognises that the lack of control over access to, and the placing of information on, the Internet may cause problems. Following representations from Provinces and individual Lodges (and Chapters in the Royal Arch) the Board agreed a **Code of Practice** for Web sites. The expansion in the use of the Internet and e-mail, and the burgeoning technology available to a wider audience since the Code was agreed and published, require a refinement of the Code.

There is no objection to Metropolitan, Provincial and District Grand Lodges, or individual Lodges and Chapters setting up Web sites, but to ensure accuracy and consistency on policy matters the material to be used should be forwarded to the Grand Secretary for approval in advance of its use. Approved sites will then have the right to carry a **Charter Mark** on the Home page, which will be issued by the Grand Secretary.

Web sites of a Masonic nature or which include Masonic material, which are established by, or in connection with Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Lodges or individual Lodges or Chapters which contain material which is considered by Grand Lodge to be injudicious or contrary to United Grand Lodge policy, will be required to amend or remove this material. Refusal or dilatory response would render the Masonic parties involved subject to Masonic discipline.

The use of e-mail for Masonic correspondence raises questions of security, protocol, capital costs and staffing. An advisory committee is investigating and will report to the Board. Until such time as the Board has formulated its policy communications with Grand Lodge should be by post, fax or telephone and should observe long-standing protocols.

2 Web sites

- 2.1 Metropolitan, Provincial and District Grand Lodges under the United Grand Lodge of England, and their equivalents under the Supreme Grand Chapter of England, who wish to establish Masonic Websites should submit their proposed content to the Grand Secretary for approval before they are published on the World Wide Web.

Designs may be submitted in electronic form (e.g. CD-ROM), hard copy or via a secure Web site which can be accessed by the UGLE Webmaster.

- 2.2 Owners of Web sites which are already in existence are also encouraged to apply for approval.
- 2.3 A Web site which has been officially approved will be expected, at a minimum, to carry on the 'welcome' or 'home' page a Charter Mark which is a small representation of the Arms of Grand Lodge together with the statement

Approved by the United Grand Lodge of England



The Charter Mark is issued by the UGLE Webmaster on behalf of the Grand Secretary. It is a colour jpeg graphic file, size 12Kb. Its dimensions are 75 pixels by 106pixels. The Charter Mark must have attached a hyperlink to the United Grand Lodge of England website (www.ugle.org.uk). It should also carry a span title (alt text) with the text

Link to the UGLE site.

The Charter Mark also carries an approval number which identifies the Web site in a register of approvals held by the UGLE Webmaster. The image must not be modified in any way.

2.4 There will be no overt advertising for any commercial enterprise, or any covert advertising in the form of electronic links, hypertext etc. This especially applies to Masons' business and outside interests. (see 2.15) However, it is accepted that Provinces and Districts may wish to sell Masonic Year Books, Masonic ties, new and second-hand Masonic regalia etc. as a service to their members and may wish to make this service available via the Web site. It is further accepted that it is not reasonable to regard as them being a commercial enterprise in such circumstances.

- 2.5 It must be remembered that Websites are available to any member of the public worldwide and care should be taken that views put forward reflect United Grand Lodge policy. Any Website produced by a unit under the United Grand Lodge of England will be seen as a reflection of that body regardless of who has set it up.
- 2.6 United Grand Lodge does not endorse the writings of individuals. Web pages giving the text of talks, addresses, orations etc. by individuals, or extracts from books, pamphlets, journals, newspapers etc. will not be entitled to carry any form of Grand Lodge approval. Furthermore they will carry the message
This page and its content has not been approved by the United Grand Lodge of England
- 2.7 Names, addresses and personal details of living individuals, or photographs of them, must not be published on the Web site without their prior written permission. Details of Candidates must **never** be published. If a group photograph is displayed permission must have been obtained from every individual in the photograph. If one or more individuals does not give prior permission the photograph may not be displayed.
- 2.8 A web site for a Lodge or Chapter may not be set up by an individual without the formal agreement of the Lodge or Chapter concerned.
- 2.9 When a Web site is ready for approval the Lodge Secretary or Chapter Scribe E must apply initially in writing and not the site designer. Before it is made available to the public by being published on the World Wide Web, permission should be sought from the relevant Masonic Authority, i.e. Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Lodge prior to the UGLE Charter Mark being sought. It is preferred that the Charter Mark is sought by the Province or District following their approval.
- 2.10 Lodge or Chapter summonses which contain personal details may not be posted on the open pages of the Web site. Similarly Lodge or Chapter Minutes may not be posted on open pages. However, there would be no objection to a 'News' page commenting on what, in general, is to happen at the next meeting e.g. elections, a talk, or which ceremony is to be worked. Any identification of a Candidate's personal details is expressly forbidden.
- 2.11 Care should be taken over the inclusion of copyright material. Copyright subsists not only in the printed word (not just books but also newspapers, magazines and pamphlets) but also in 'images' (photography and art works). If such material is to be used the copyright holder's permission *must* be sought. Failure to do so can lead to prosecution.
- 2.12 Care should be taken to ensure that the website is kept up to date. It should be the responsibility of the Lodge or Chapter to inform the Webmaster of any changes such as following Installation etc. The site should also be accurate and grammatically correct, and care should be taken over spelling and punctuation. Undue flippancy or content which does not exhibit a certain level of decorum should be avoided. It is not in any member's interest to embarrass the Lodge in particular or the Craft in general.
- 2.13 If a Web site includes a 'Visitors' Book' or 'Comments page' or any vehicle inviting feedback and comment the content should be carefully and regularly monitored. Any items including profanity, religious, political or anti-Masonic comments should be removed as soon as possible or UGLE Approval may be withdrawn.
- 2.14 If a Web site is to provide hyperlinks to other Masonic Web sites the bona fides of those Web sites should be checked with the UGLE Webmaster.
If links are provided to other Masonic sites a disclaimer should be displayed on the page with the following text:
We do not guarantee that Web sites accessed via links on this page are either Masonic in nature or have been approved or endorsed by the United Grand Lodge of England. We specifically do not warrant that any other Web sites accessible from their pages are recognised by, or have the approval of, the United Grand Lodge of England.
- 2.15 It is recommended that Masonic Web sites pay in full for their sites to be hosted on the World Wide Web. It is not advisable to sign up with Internet Service Providers who offer free or reduced cost access to the Internet in return for carrying advertising. The advertisements tend to change daily without prior notification of content. The Web site could inadvertently breach guidelines and regulations. (see 2.4)
- 2.16 Password protected areas for Members only (Please see appendix C).
- 2.17 The Web site must be for the purposes of publishing information about a Masonic unit and not the individual who designs, maintains or owns the site. United Grand Lodge do not wish to see hyperlinks to the designer's

personal site, or text or advertisements offering his expertise to others. Information on, and hyperlinks from, a Masonic Web site must be concerned with Masonic information only.

- 2.18 Extra-curricular activities such as 'dining clubs', 'curry clubs' or 'wine clubs' etc. must not be advertised on a Masonic Web site, but may be linked to from a Masonic Web site. The following disclaimer must be displayed on the page with the hyperlink.

We do not guarantee that Web sites accessed via links on this page are either Masonic in nature or have been approved or endorsed by the United Grand Lodge of England. We specifically do not warrant that any other Web sites accessible from their pages are recognised by, or have the approval of, the United Grand Lodge of England.

- 2.19 It is recommended that the domain name for the site uses the **.org.uk** Top Level Domain since English Freemasonry is not a commercial organisation but is a UK-based non-commercial organisation. The Web site name should not be such that it can be confused with any commercial enterprise.

3 Internet - Forums and 'Chat Rooms'

It has been brought to the notice of the Board that some Brethren are using the Internet not only to make contact with other Freemasons, which may be unexceptionable, but also as a means of seeking guidance on questions which should properly be addressed to their Provincial or District Grand Secretaries, from whom authoritative answers are available. Such enquiries frequently elicit a variety of different answers (of which many are, in the nature of things, likely to be wrong) and the Board considers that directing questions on protocol and similar matters to those participating in an Internet forum is inappropriate both for that reason and because of the nature of the subject-matter involved.

(Extract from Report of Board of General Purposes, adopted 13 March 2002)

4 Summonses, electronic communication of

The Board has been asked whether it is or should be possible for Lodge summonses to be sent to members by e-mail rather than through the post. After considering the question, the Board recommends that in those cases where the Secretary of a Lodge is able and willing to despatch summonses by such means, it should be sufficient compliance with the Book of Constitutions if summonses are sent by e-mail to those members who have requested it. Any such request should be made in writing and on an annual basis. Every other member should, however, continue to receive summonses by post, and it is essential that at least one printed copy of each summons be retained by the Lodge for its records. In addition any summons required to be sent to the relevant Masonic Authority must be sent in printed form unless electronic transmission has been requested.

(Extract from the Report of Board of General Purposes, adopted 13 December 2000)

Appendix A

Suggested content of a Metropolitan, Provincial or District Web site

- A1 a 'welcome' or 'home' page displaying:
- the name of the Province or District
 - geographical coverage (e.g. a map showing meeting places)
 - contact details for further information, which may include embedded e-mail addresses
 - facility for contacting the Webmaster in the event of feedback etc. about the site
 - the Provincial or District crest or badge
 - the UGLE Charter Mark
- A2 details of the Metropolitan, Provincial or District Executive (see 2.7 above)
- A3 details of the Metropolitan, Province or District meeting places, including which Lodges and Chapters meet at each and hyperlinks to their Web sites
- A4 a brief history of the Metropolitan, Province or District Grand Lodge, including important dates and events in its history, and any historical figures connected with it
Note that where historical events and members cannot be verified they should not be included.
- A5 Masonic news at (a) national and (b) local levels
- A6 a diary of events
- A7 official statements etc from Grand Lodge on 'hot' topics etc.
Note that a hyperlink to the United Grand Lodge of England would be desirable. (see 2.3 above)
- A8 the Metropolitan, Provincial or District Newsletter if there is one

Appendix B

Suggested content of a Lodge or Chapter Web site

- B1 a 'welcome' or 'home' page displaying:
- the name and number of the Lodge or Chapter
 - meeting location
 - meeting dates, identifying the Installation meeting if desired
 - contact details for further information, which may include embedded e-mail addresses
 - facility for contacting the Webmaster in the event of feedback etc. about the site
 - the Lodge or Chapter badge or crest
 - the UGLE Charter Mark (including a hyperlink to www.ugle.org.uk)
 - the Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Lodge Charter Mark if it exists
- B2 a brief history of the Lodge or Chapter, including any important dates and events, and any historical figures connected with it
- B3 photographs of Officers and members of the Lodge.
- B4 a diary of future events, both Masonic and social
- B5 Lodge or Chapter news. Bear in mind that individuals can only be referred to with their prior written agreement

Appendix C

Password protected area

Grand Lodge accepts that it may be necessary to have password protected areas on a website for administration purposes. But please be aware that the perception is that we have something to hide and are not therefore 100% open to the public.

Also password-protected areas may encourage hackers to hack into these areas. However, if you feel a password-protected area is appropriate for your members then the following cautions apply:

1. Instead of having a button that said members only, it would be better if it said Administration.
2. Member details such as name and contact details must have written permission from each member who wishes to be on a secure page.
3. Lodge summonses should only be posted on a secure web page if all the members of the lodge have given written permission and this permission is repeated on an annual basis.
4. Minutes – Grand Lodge believes that in some cases minutes contain far more detail than is necessary, particularly in relation to the ceremonial work of the lodge. Grand Lodge considers that the function of Minutes is to provide the formal record of the business transacted at each meeting of a Lodge, rather than a detailed description of every aspect of the ceremonies and administrative business, probably due to the overuse of word-processors. Therefore you must restrict the Minutes, in so far as they relate to the ceremonies of the three degrees and the Installation of the new Master, to identify the ceremony, the Candidate and the particular Brethren undertaking the work (if that is not immediately obvious from the offices such Brethren hold).
5. Ritual – It is not appropriate for ritual to be posted on any part of a Masonic website, including password-protected areas.