# Good OA Web Site Characteristics
(15 minute session)

**1) What is the purpose of the Web Site?** (get some ideas from the group)
The purpose of the OA web site is to provide information in 4 ways.

**a) General information on the OA including:**

- Mission Statement
- Information about the structure of the OA and how the web site fits in (ie. Chapter, Lodge, Section etc.)
- Goals
- Contact information
- Links
- Resources

**b) To act as a newsletter providing information on:**
- Recent events and activities – let members and the public know what has been happening, service provided, fun activities
- Including a calendar of upcoming events – gives people information and also enables promotion.

**c) To act as a showcase for the organization:**
- Provide historical information
- Acts as a scrapbook – accessible photos, illustrations etc.

**d) Allows alternate means of dissemination and collection of information:**
- Newsletters in PDF form save postage (doesn't replace newsletter, only for those who want electronic version).
- Online forms for dues, activities, etc. also save postage and may be more convenient.

**2) Need to keep information current.** – How often should site be updated? Ask the group. Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly? It depends on the information.

a) Some information doesn't change and probably only needs to be reviewed yearly  - such as the mission statement, structure, goals and

links.  Historical information and the scrapbook can be added to as more information and materials become available, but doesn't get out of date

b) Most of the site should be revised at least monthly.  Take down old information (or move it to the scrapbook or historical area).  Put out current information as it becomes available.

c) It is a good idea to decide in advance what needs to be revised, when it needs to be done and who will do the revisions.

## 3) Who is the audience for the site?

Remember that both Arrowmen and non-Arrowmen will visit the site. Provide enough information to explain the OA to the public or at least direct them to where they can find out about the organization.  Be sure to follow the guidelines and policies of the BSA and the Order of the Arrow regarding web sites.

## 4) Elements of Good Web Design

**a)  Don't post "under construction" messages**

The Web is *always* under construction, just like your site. Don't put "under construction" graphics. It makes your site unprofessional looking and tells your visitor something he or she already knows.

**b)  Don't link to pages that don't exist**

If you don't have anything to put on a page, don't link to it. There's nothing that more irritating than clicking on a link only to get a "this page isn't done yet" message.

**c)  Don't underline text for emphasis**

On the Web underlining is used for hyperlinks, so if you want to emphasize something, **bold** or *italicize* it. Don't underline.

**d) Be careful with images**

Some people have slow or very slow connections to the Internet. The more images you put on a page, the longer it takes for them to load. If it takes too long, it may not be worth the wait. Try using thumbnails that link to larger images.  That way people can see only what they want to see.  Also some people only use browsers that display text. Put in an <alt> tag with a description of the photo and most browsers will display that information**.**

**d)  Make the pages easy to read**

Don't make page too long.  Use list, tables and bold.  Try to use light pages with dark text.  Dark backgrounds or patterned backgrounds are usually hard to read.

**e)  Don't get too fancy.**

JavaScript is neat but not everyone has the latest machine or the newest browser.  JavaScript can crash some computers. Similarly, not everyone has a huge monitor, so make sure that your page will fit on at least a typical size screen.  Also remember that there are lots of computer systems – PC and Mac, with Netscape or IE – what looks great on one system may not work on another.  Try to keep thing fairly simple and check various systems.

**f)  Be consistent**

Be consistent in the style on the pages and in the way you have people navigate around the site.  Use a navigation menu and quick links to previous pages or sections of the page.

## 5) Publicize your site – ways to promote your site
   a) Use current publications – newsletters etc.
   b) Council newsletters
   c) At events – posters of site or set up a computer
   d) Use search engines
   e) Get listed on other sites (council, section, region etc.)

## 6) Criteria used for judging the NOAC Web Site Competition
   a) **PERCEPTION** – includes layout, design and navigation.
   b) **INFORMATION** – current data, Council/Lodge information, contact information provided, site well organized.
   c) **GENERAL** - Web site follows national OA web site guidelines, has links to appropriate Section/Region/National sites.

## 7) Examples, references and sample site
Provide appropriate examples of good sites as well as list of references to use.  Possibly bring up sites on large screen and evaluate as a group - good and bad - use show of hands to answer the question discuss why based on previous training. **(To be prepared later)**

## 8) Summary and Discussion

revised 7/25/02