NOAC 2002 WEB SITE TRAINING
PRODUCING AND MAINTAINING A WEB SITE

1.   GOALS AND MISSION STATEMENTS OF A WEB SITE

- The first step in designing a Web site is to make sure you have defined a set of goals, know what it is you want to accomplish with your Web site.

- Without a clear statement of purpose and objectives the project will begin to wander off course and bog down, or may go on past the point of diminishing returns.

- Careful planning and a clear sense of purpose are the keys to success in building Web sites, particularly if you will be working as part of a team to build the site. Before beginning to build your Web site you should:

    o   Identify your target audience
    o   Identify who will be responsible in the generating and approving of the web site.
    o   Have a statement of purpose, or "Your Mission"
    o   Know your main Objectives, or "Your Goals"

- The Mission should identify your audience, and the people that will be responsible for producing, and maintaining your Web Site, specifically who will create it, and who will approve it. Your mission should also briefly state the purpose of the Web Site. The mission of the National Order of the Arrow Web Site is:

"The National Order of the Arrow Web Site, www.oa-bsa.org, is set up to provide official information on the Order of the Arrow, Scouting's National Honor Society, and its programs. The material presented is made available under the authority of the National Order of the Arrow Committee."

- Keep in mind the Official OA Web Site Guidelines, which state that "The appropriate OA leadership must have direct control over the content of its official web site (i.e. the Key 3 at each level of the organization)."

- The Goals of a Web Site should briefly explain the main objectives of your Web Site, or what specific tasks do you aspect to accomplish through the use of the Web Site

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD CHAIRMAN

- The Youth Chairman of the Web Site will be the youth that is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Web Site. He coordinates the site layout, design, maintenance of information, and keeping up to date. He oversees the Web Site Youth Staff, and makes sure that everyone does their part.

- He needs to be Dedicated, not only to the mission of the lodge and the Order of the Arrow, but also to the mission of the web site.

- Active in the lodge, so he know what is going on.

- A leader, one who sets the example and lives up to the scout oath and law.

- The computer knowledge and skills of the youth chairman is not entirely vital as compared with the advisor, and those on the web team. The youth chairman should oversee the process, and updating of the web sites. Those skills that he does not contain will be easily learned from the adult advisor and the other youth on the web team.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ADVISOR

- The Adult Advisor to any Web Site serves as a moderator, he ensures that the Web Site follows the National OA Web Site Guidelines, aids in the recruiting/selection of the Web Site Staff, and helps out whenever requested by the youth.

- Dedicated, to the mission of the site, and to providing the youth with the resources and knowledge they need to accomplish the mission.

- Active in the lodge, so he can report to the key 3 of the lodge the status of the lodge's site.

- A moderator, or someone who will allow the youth to take control and work through the challenges of producing and maintaining the lodge web site.

- It is also vital that the Advisor has knowledge of computer systems, and websites. He should also have the resources to assistance you and your team in creating a quality internet presence.

- The structural design of the Web Site team is up to you.

4. **WEB HOSTINGS, AND YOUR OPTIONS**

- In order to have a Web Site, you must find a service to host your site on the internet. There are many options for you to explore, including commercial web hosting services, discounted hosting for service organizations, and even free hosting options.

- Let's not forget here that many times our own council's may already have hosting options that are available to you. However, there are pluses and minuses involved with using a council's hosting service:

CONS	PROS
o 1 – First and foremost, it is not yours. You do not have direct control over the operations of your hosting.	o 3 – Its free!
o 2 – Some council's may only give the OA a single page, instead of allowing you to have an entire site	o 4 – You are already linked to and from the council site, which makes your lodge and integral part of your council's web presence

- Commercial Hosting – Commercial hosting can be the most expensive option, however, it allows you totally freedom to choose how you want to set up your web site. There are literally thousands of companies on the internet that are willing to host your site, all for the cost of your domain (which is optional), plus the cost of the space, and any hosting options you choose. Commercial hosting also give you the option to have your own domain, such as www.your-lodge.org. Many sections and lodges have chosen to go to commercial hosting, or some sort of deal with a company, to have the freedom of their own domain.

- Discounted Options, these include companies that are willing to host your OA site because you are either associated with the Boy Scouts of America, or you are a service organization. They are willing to give you space for a discounted fee, or for placing a banner on your page. Some examples of sites that offer discounted hosting options include: serviceweb.net, and hostrocket.com, as well as superb.net. All of these services will offer your organization hosting options from 9 dollars and up. Serviceweb Networks is a not-for-profit corporation that allows hosting to service based organizations, including Order of the Arrow. Their hosting options are around 100 dollars a month, including your own domain registration.

- Free Hosting is obviously the best chose financially, but is often not the best choice. Services offering free web space often include banner ads, pop-up windows, and annoying scrolling graphics. These can often take away attention from your users, and often clutters up your nice looking web page. Free hosting is best for those that are not willing to fork over any money to set up a site. For beginners, a bonus to free hosting, is that often times they have many utilities and online programs to aid you in initially setting up your site.

- When surfing through the internet, you may also find sites that will host scouting based groups free web hosting. A good example of this is www.scouter.com, which will give a scouting group free 2 MB of space to host their own site.

5.   BACKING UP DATA

- Backing up your Data is not just important, it is extremely vital to the operations of your Web Site. Backups are so very important because after you launch your Web Site, down-time is time that your users are not getting the information they need.

- Backing up your data is a good practice, and continually keeping up with your backups is just as important.

- Next, we need to determine how often we want to perform a backup. It is important to perform a backup *at least* every 6 months, to make sure that your information will not totally be lost. The more often you backup your data the better, just don't go overboard.

- Where to store your backups, and how many copies of your backup should you make is the next question. You backups should be stored on

media that is not in the same location, or on the same media as your site. It is important to specify locations, or who will be responsible for backups of you Web Site.

6. **PAGE CREATION TOOLS**

   - When it comes to page creation tools, you have literally HUNDEREDS of options to choose from What You See Is What You Get programs, to Code Oriented Tools, to integrated tools, to Notepad.

   - Depending on your experience as Web Desigs, you can use a variety of tools, and packages to aid in the creation of your Web Site. Many tools today are designed as What You See Is What You Get tools. You can design your page in a program, test it out, and then publish it. All without writing one line of code, or HTML. These tools can be very handy, and are used by many beginner designers. Examples of these include: Microsoft Frontpage, Adobe PageMill, Macromedia Dreamweaver, and the list goes on and on.

   - Code Oriented tools allow you to write, and edit a variety of codes (HTML, DHTML. JavaScript, CSS, PHP, etc…), and give you total control over the feel and look of your site, because you often have to manually type in the code yourself. This is often a bonus for advanced web designers, but can be useful to those that like to use pre-written scripts (be sure to get permission from the author).

   - Integrated tools, are those web page creation utilities that are included as part of a web editing package. A good example of a program that is an integrated tool is Macromedia's Dreamweaver, which is built to work with both Flash and Fireworks. Another example of an integrated untility is Netscape's Composer which is part of the Netscape Communicator package, which is now free for download at netscape.com.

- Please note: For mac users, please be sure to check with the manufacturer of any program for a Macintosh version.

7. PAGE CHECKING TOOLS

- Page checking tools will examine the HTML coding, and make sure that you have not made any serious mistakes, and that your code has no bugs in it. Page checking tools are extremely useful, and can often take the headache out of searching your code for an error. Some page checking tools will also verify that all the links on your page work as well, which is a nice feature.

- The best page checking tool is the online HTML Validation Service from W3C, at validator.w3.org. This free service will give you an warning and fatal errors that may exist on your page.   This validation service will check your documents for conformance to the W3C Recommendations and other standards.

- Other page checking tools include:
    o Net Mechanic HTML Verification and Linkcheck
        www.netmechanic.com
    o Dr. HTML Web Page Testing
        www2.imagiware.com/RxHTML/
    o Website Garage
        www.websitegarage.com

8. OTHER UTILITIES OR PROGRAMS

- Other Utilities that are often used when designing and publishing a website on the internet is an FTP (or File Transfer Protocal) client

application, Adobe Photoshop, Jasc Paint Shop Pro, as well as Macromedia Flash and other multimedia tools.

- The list goes on and on, but these tools are other programs that web designers will utilize to easily and conveniently create a website.

- **FTP Programs** – allow you to connect to a website, and transfer files into your website's directory. You can also create sub-directories, as well as delete or modify permissions on files that you have transferred onto your website's server. An FTP program is used to publish your site's files onto a server to be viewed by the rest of the world. Some examples of FTP programs are: WS_FTP, cuteFTP, and AceFTP. There are several FTP programs that can be downloaded for free, to check them out, go to cnet.com, and look in the download section for FTP applications.

- **Image Editing** – When developing and creating your website, you will find the need to create images in either .JPEG or .GIF format to be displayed on your site. There are several tools to allow you to easily create good-looking images for you website. Some of the more popular include: Adobe Photoshop, Jasc Paint Shop Pro, as well as Macromedia's Fireworks. Each of these products allow you to edit, and create your own images for use on your web site. The detail involved in your images is entirely up to you, and you will find that is will some times take longer to create and image for a page then it does to create that page. Be sure to save your images in a high quality or low quality depending on the importance.

- **Multimedia** - There are also products that will allow you to create a multimedia presentation to include on your website, or even an interactive browsing experience. Two specific programs that will allow you to do this is Macromedia's Flash, as well as Adobe's LiveMotion software. Keep in mind that in order for you visitors to view either of these they must download and install a plugin to view them. Also, multimedia animations such as these will increase the download size of your site, or the time it

takes for your visitor to view your information. If you decide to use one of these programs for you site, be sure to allow your visitors the choice to view these.

9.   USEFUL WEB SITES

- Some Useful web sites that may help you along the way when creating your website are:

  o National Site, *www.oa-bsa.org*. Here you can find the Website guidelines, which were created by the National Committee for the Order of the Arrow, and should be adhered for all official OA websites.

  o National Photo Permission form, *www.scouting.org/site/standards/appendix-a.html*

  o Regional Sites, each region has their own site on the national site, *region_name.oa-bsa.org* (i.e. northeast.oa-bsa.org). Your region's site can be a valuable resource for regional and national dates to include on your calendar, along with links to the other sections and lodge's in your area.

  o *www.webstyleguide.com/* – The essential guide for web site designers provides practical, concise advice on creating well-designed and effective web sites and pages. Focusing on the interface and graphic design principles that underlie the best web site design, this site offers invaluable help on a full range of issues, from planning and organizing goals to design strategies for a site to the elements of individual page design.

  o *www.sev.com.au/webzone/design.asp* - The Sevloid Guide to Web Design is a collection of over 100 tips, tricks and techniques on

every aspect of web design. The tips are sorted into the categories of page layout, navigation, content, graphics and more.

10. SUMMARY

In conclusion, Having your lodge on the internet can be a valuable resource and a quick form of communication to by utilized by your lodge. Before you get going on your site, don't forget these:

- Your lodge's website should be a valuable tool for communication, and aid your lodge in achieving it's goals. But remember, Content before context.

- Be sure to follow the National OA Website guidelines when creating your website

- Good Luck!