



As has been experienced in mainstream journalism, the actual printed word is rapidly taking second place to the growing on-line distribution of news. This trend is already evident from the number of Scout Groups who are already disseminating their news using digital newsletters or blogs / articles on their websites.

The rules governing the annual HV Marsh Award for Scout Journalism have been amended to accommodate the submission of digital newsletters and articles/blog posts on Group websites.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment of digital newsletters and articles/blog posts on websites will be considered under the following equal valued headings:

1. PLEASURE TO READ

How enjoyable is the publication to read? The main target audience is parents who know only a little about Scouting. Does the publication make them look forward to reading the next edition, or seeing the next website update? Is the content worth reading and is the style engaging? Are the articles interesting, varied, challenging, and appealing (not just factual reporting)?

2. PLEASURE TO WRITE

Is there ample evidence that the Group has enjoyed creating the publication? Is there input from all departments of the Group or is it padded out with borrowed articles and clipart? Has the Group adhered to the legalities with regards to plagiarism and crediting sources?

3. INFORMATION ACCESS

Does the reader get swift information with regards to the Group's events and programmes? For example the Group activities and future dates? Names and phone numbers of key people in the Group? Badge progress of individual Scouts? Contact information for the Region, including website addresses? Is the information up-to-date and updated regularly?

4. LAYOUT

Are the pages attractive to look at? Is there a balance of photos and text? Is their usage of typeface, headings, imagery and logos in line with SSA's brand manual and PR policy?

5. SCOUT INVOLVEMENT

Is this a digital newsletter or blog / site produced by a few keen adults, or are the Scouts and Rovers themselves part of their own publication? How full/regular are the Patrol reports? Are reports on Jamborees or District events written by participants themselves? In a lesser degree, what about Cub contributions?

The notes above should act as guidelines for your content planning. Here is a check list of vital ingredients:

- FORTHCOMING EVENTS with date/time/place
- KEY MEMBERS OF THE GROUP with phone numbers
- BADGE PROGRESS
- REPORTS ON RECENT EVENTS in Group and District
- PATROL REPORTS
- HUMOUR
- ARE ALL THE IMAGES USED LEGAL?

Don't worry overmuch about regular "Reports" from section leaders. They contribute enough of their spare time already. Just urge them to write when they have something worth saying. (And there should be more praise than grumbles!) The most valuable contribution from adults are often overviews on the Scouting spirit within the Group.

PRODUCTION METHODS

Websites and digital newsletters are amongst our most valuable publicity tools. Groups are urged to aim for the best presentation available.

Information must be current, but beware of promising updates too frequently, in case you can't keep it up! Don't say things like "this weekend" or "next month", because you only know when it will be read, or how long till the next update.

Remember that everything on the website can be read by the public. Do not include full names or contact information of the Cubs or Scouts. If you publish photos of children under 18 years of age make sure you have parental consent (the SSA standard consent forms/indemnity forms include the permission clause so if those are signed, you are covered). This is vital for child protection. Don't include copyrighted material.

Avoid using too many technical tricks, as they might not work for everyone, and may distract the visitors (and the designer) from the real purpose of the site. And, admit it, not every Group has a professional web designer who can get the technical stuff working properly!

AWARD

The judges may, at their discretion, bestow a Silver or Gold standard certificate on a digital newsletter, blog/ articles from a website which does not meet these criteria, but such a publication will not be eligible for the Award itself. (So at least 4 blog posts / articles issues of the digital newsletter during the year is your target).

National Office

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