

Subject:	WEBMASTER REPORT FOR 2011	Annex No. -	5
Author:	Susan Dixon, IPC Webmaster	Agenda ref. -	7.2
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Since my last report, 2011 has been a very interesting year as Webmaster, with its highs and lows.

The year started well when I was able to attend, and report from, the 2nd Dubai International Parachuting Competition and Gulf Cup. By utilising the IPC Portal, established as a link to the FAI site, we were able to produce results “as it happened” and videos from the CP competition, and at the end, thanks to the excellent organisation, we were given a video of the whole competition which the FAI loaded onto the FAI YouTube channel.

Although at this time there was talk of the “new” FAI Website I was unaware of how this would be developed or look. The year continued well with a report live from the IPC Meeting in Montenegro and at the next competition, Para-Ski in Gosau, Austria. Thanks to the assistance of the organisation I was able to report from the event and post results as soon as they were available to the competitors. At the same time the TV production company Flying Aces sent a team to create a documentary record of the event. Again this was available to view on line. And yet again thanks to my co-worker and friend, Fay Kimble's work on the IPC Portal.

Then disaster struck and the FAI suffered a catastrophic crash of their website server. Graeme has reported on this in his reports from the interim meetings of the Bureau. After several weeks without anything, a new server was installed and some of the old site was recreated on it – but with many gaps and some “lost forever” history. The temporary “old site” was very cobbled together and limited in the information available. Eventually the office of the FAI asked for our help in identifying some of the documents they had salvaged and assistance with finding others. It was a very difficult and frustrating time, with lost links, and FAI staff who tried to help, whilst at the same time trying to finalise the New Site.

At the end of July we were informed that “*from the ... August everything on the old site will be transferred to the new, and anything after that will have to be re-input once the new site is up and running*”. Fortunately Saarlouis just made it into the *before* phase – and, again thanks to the help of the organisation, Fay and I were able to post “live” results, a daily “blog” and for the first time – every video of the FS competition.

A small comment here – at all the competitions I attend I find the organisational staff helpful and accommodating, but those organisations do not give the FAI/IPC website priority; and so, in Saarlouis the live feed from the video recording station went to the organisers' website, and we had to take copies from this posting for the IPC Portal. This involved Fay and I in many hours of additional work – even to the extent of missing the evening's entertainment!

I was unable to attend the Canopy Piloting meeting in Klatovy, but thanks to the good work of the Jury members I was able to post a daily report, pictures (thanks Barry McAuley) and the results from the competition. Although we had set up a “live link” for the results with Cametrix, the problems they experienced prohibited its use.. Unfortunately both this competition and Kikinda were after the change-over deadline – but I have kept a copy of everything that was posted, and by the time this meeting happens I hope to have all transferred to the “New Site”.

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Kikinda, Style & Accuracy, followed the same pattern as Klatovy, with excellent reports and pictures from Lindy Rochow-Williams under difficult circumstances and a very poor internet connection. Again the pre-arranged “live” results set-up with Cametrix failed, due to their problems.

Now to the New Site. This was launched at the FAI General Conference and was, I understand, well received by the delegates there. It was launched early and is still in an immediate post development phase, and so I am learning it as it settles down. Faustine Carrera (the FAI Communications Officer) certainly understands communication and is responsive and helpful when called upon. She has worked closely with the IT team and so understands the system well.

I am getting used to the new look – and it does take a little time to learn the thinking behind the routing of information. The site has been designed very much as a whole – definitely the FAI Website with the intention and philosophy of a unified central core and only those items which are specific to an Air Sport appearing on that Air Sports pages. A unified look, organisation of “paths” following a standard format etc. However, I am finding that Faustine is very happy to take suggestions and follow them up if necessary with the development team. She is very aware that what we have now is not the finished product and there is a way to go to keep everyone happy.

As your webmaster not only am I concerned with how the site looks, but also on how it works in terms of inputting data, pictures etc. At the moment of writing this report it is of considerable concern to me. The site is very slow and cumbersome in the way it is structured, and to input a simple document is complex and takes a long time. I am particularly concerned as to how this will be reflected when I am at a competition with a poor internet link. Having discussed this with Faustine she assures me that it is something the IT team are working on, as I am not the only webmaster to comment on this.

One of the negatives I have is with the reluctance of the FAI to accept pictures on the site – preferring instead that we use the independent photo site, Flickr. Their reasoning being that large numbers of pictures slow down the site. This certainly would be the case if photos were not optimised for web use, but all websites of note do this as a matter of course, indeed a process I have always employed. However, in its current form (at November 2011), accessing Flickr from the FAI/IPC website displays photos pertaining to hot air ballooning! Regrettably, photos of all air sports are lumped together with only an event title and no description as to what the photo depicts. Our sport will always be photogenic and whilst the adage of *a picture paints a thousand words* will always be true, I’ve always sort to use photos in my various reportings, as a way of informing readers, identifying competitors, officials and medal winners of course. A written report devoid of pictorial content will soon have the reader reaching for the ‘back’ button.

I am also on a steep learning curve, and although, in essence, working on a website is much the same whatever, I am still having to find my way around this one. In terms of actual inputting a document it is certainly easier with regard to layout and formatting of a document than the old FAI site was and I still have the ability to work directly in text format or html or a combination of both.

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There are aspects of the site I find absolutely frustrating – the fact that I can only log-in via the main FAI portal, then have to move to the IPC pages to work on them – and then when I save that document I end up back on the FAI portal page and have to work through several “clicks” before I can view what I have done, as there is no ‘preview’ available.

If I want to search a document to edit I have to scroll through all the other commissions before I find the IPC section – there is no short-cut – and the same with inputting a picture or link I don't know if, with this software package and development it is possible to alter this, or it is just a question of getting used to it. Faustine keeps saying to me “it is new” – it's not that I don't do “new” but I don't do “long winded”. Life is too short to waste time!

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By the time I present this report I will have covered the 3rd Dubai International Parachuting Competition & Gulf Cup and may well have a very different feeling about the site. As this is a second category event it is difficult to insist on the support of the organisation but I have requested the individuals responsible for the electronic judging system and results to give us live feeds – we shall see.

When I started this job, 6 years ago, it was with the intention of building a library of historical information on the website covering International Competitions, be they World Championships, World Cups or open International competitions. My thinking was that this record would cover the daily events of the competition; where relevant, the “Dive Sheets”; full details of the delegations including names and pictures of all the competitors; and of course the results and the medal winners. So that, at any time in the future anyone could look back and see what and who made that competition memorable. I have not managed to achieve that with all competitions; it is certainly easier when I attend them myself. However, at this moment in time I am not sure what remains of the past 6 years work. I am working with Faustine to see what can be recovered – needless to say, from now on I am keeping a record of what I post onto the website on a hard disc.

An unexpected and unfortunate consequence of the crash of the old site and its subsequent replacement, is that all the published links out there on the world wide web, which anyone would access via search engines (Google, Yahoo etc), no longer function, producing a 404 error page. I don't know if it is/was possible to put in a temporary bridge for all those links to follow – probably not. I am sure all the commissions, once they realise, will feel the same way.

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One of the items that seems to have been lost also are the pictures and skydiving history of each Delegate so I shall be there at the Plenary taking pictures and asking you, again (sorry) to fill in a sheet of personal information with regard to your skydiving history.

Finally, (did I say I don't do "long winded"!), one of the clauses in my contract with FAI/IPC is to secure information from delegates about news and competitions in their own countries to be included on the web – so please, please do send me stuff – any record attempts/success, National is great, competitions etc. etc. A website only works if it is kept live with new information.

I look forward to covering the IPC Plenary meeting in Argentina and producing my regular daily reports at the event and meeting many of you there.

Susan Dixon
November 2011

We have a stat counter (number of hits) on the IPC Portal web-site.

Total hits to date:

Saarlouis	26,482
Klatovy	25,939
Kikinda	9,389