

Webmaster Report for NZSA AGM December 2017

In late 2016 the NZSA was notified that in June 2017 the Royal Society would be changing the arrangements for the website hosting of the Royal Society website, and the other websites it hosts. This meant that the NZSA had the option of changing the website hosting away from the Royal Society, or changing to a website developed using a “Hoppon” template, still managed in WordPress, supported by “prefer” digital solutions company based in Wellington.

The general idea was to improve the appearance and functionality of the Royal Society’s website and websites hosted by the Royal Society. This includes features such as the ability to fill in forms online, people to sign up for newsletters, membership management and functionality for use on mobile devices.

To summarise the 4 available options:

1. Change the website hosting away from the Royal Society;
2. Change to the Prefer/Hoppon option ourselves for free;
3. Change to the Prefer/Hoppon option with some assistance for \$3000 + GST;
4. Change to the Prefer/Hoppon option with Prefer doing all the work for \$5000 + GST.

Ian Westbrooke as President was supportive of pursuing option #4, that the work of transferring the website is done by the professionals, freeing me to keep up with the regular maintenance and additions to the website, so we signed up for option #4 in June 2017.

This entitled us to 40 hours work by ‘prefer’ company. It didn’t seem like it should be that difficult to reproduce the existing website which we’re happy with, and I assumed that the Royal Society would also be switching to a Hoppon website as they had made the recommendation of using this company. However, it turned out that the Royal Society didn’t feel that the Hoppon template would meet their requirements so they made alternative arrangements.

I think the statement about “functionality for use on mobile devices” probably is the source of most of the difficulties we have had this year, as I suspect that most of us are not inclined to catch up with NZSA happenings on our mobile phones while we’re out and about. When I looked at the development site on my mobile phone it looked great, whereas there have been problems with clarity of the text and resolution of graphics on a regular screen, particularly when using Internet Explorer at work. There did seem to be opportunities to reduce the multiplicity of places that the same information can be accessed on the existing website, but I suspect that is driven by limitations with the Hoppon template.

At this stage 32 hours of our 40 hours have been used up, and the next step is for Harold Henderson as Membership representative to discuss with ‘prefer’ how membership can be paid for via the new website, with the intention of reducing the workload for the membership representative in the future.

Catherine McKenzie
NZSA Website Administrator

9 December 2017