

Standards and Guidelines
for
Internet Publishing
and
Maintaining
Local Council Web Sites



National Council

Boy Scouts of America

Guidelines

Rules and Regulations

Local councils are the primary means of delivering the Scouting program and are the main point of contact between the organization and our volunteers. Much of this takes the form of publishing or advertising. Just as in other publishing and advertising, councils are free to develop their own applications of Internet and Web technology, as long as they observe the rules and regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, as required by their charters. The *Rules and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, No. 57-492*, and the *Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America, No. 57-491*, are primary resources for these policies and procedures. Other guidelines, such as this document, may be issued by the National Council from time to time.

Representation

While the National Council provides guidelines by which it will acknowledge local councils' sites and refer others to them, each of these sites is the product and possession of the local council, and as such is representative only of the council that maintains it.

National Council Standards

While local councils may establish their own policies concerning their use of the Internet, the term *approved council Web site* used in this document refers to any local council Web site the National Council determines to have followed the numbered guidelines below. **The National Council will not acknowledge or provide links to any council site that does not meet these eight guidelines.** The guidelines may be altered or amended from time to time, and councils will be notified when that happens.

Approval Guidelines

- 1. The council must have direct control over the content of its official Web site.**
- 2. The content of the council site must be appropriate to the Scouting movement.**
- 3. The council site cannot contain links to any sites that contain material that is not appropriate to the Scouting movement.**
- 4. The council site cannot contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements.**
- 5. The council site cannot engage in the electronic sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise or competing products.**
- 6. The council site cannot replicate any BSA publication currently for sale through the Supply Division.**
- 7. Council sites must abide by all laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property ownership designations, and by those pertaining to the Internet.**
- 8. Council sites must consider the safety and privacy of their members and participants by obtaining the necessary permissions to release information about or images of any individual.**

The information that follows supports these guidelines by providing more specific information on practices and procedures that may be implemented for producing and maintaining a site that successfully meets the guidelines. Additional information is presented that extends into areas that the guidelines do not address to cover topics and procedures that are advisable, but not strictly requisite.

When considering whether to acknowledge or link to a local council Web site, the National Council will assess the council's Web site *in comparison to the guidelines themselves* (those given above) rather than any ancillary advice or recommendations (such as that which follows).

Advice on Council Web Site Policies

Site Ownership

The council's membership and the general public regard a council's official Web site as an authorized publication of that council. Because the council will be held accountable for the content of its site, the site should be wholly owned and controlled by the council.

Specifically, the council or a professional council employee (rather than a volunteer) should have legal ownership of the domain name and site content, and the server space should either be owned by the council or secured with a written service contract between the council and the Internet service provider (ISP) that hosts the site. This contract should clearly indicate the council owns its own Web site content.

Domain name

If a proprietary domain name is registered, the "registrant" on file with the InterNIC* should be the council. At the very least, the "administrative contact" designated during domain registration should be an employee of the council.

Content

The content of the site should be owned by the council rather than any individual, and that is most easily shown by having a copyright statement on the site. Of course the council may reproduce (with permission) material from other sources, but the site itself must be owned by the council. The copyright statement can be a simple "© 2000 Xyz Council, Boy Scouts of America" at the bottom of the Web page.

Site Administration

The administrative components of a Web site, namely its ownership and the procedures by which the content decisions are made and implemented, are not necessarily evident visually in the Web site itself. These matters should be considered carefully, however, as they have the potential to create profound problems in the administration of the council's site.

Site Hosting

Local councils must make their own arrangements for Web site hosting as this service is not presently provided by the National Council.

Though it is commonplace and quite acceptable under most circumstances for local councils to host their sites in donated Web space, it is advisable to have a written service agreement that guarantees the council complete control over the content of its site. Such clauses are common in commercial hosting arrangements, and are essential to maintaining reliable control over the council's Web presence.

It's worth noting that there are a number of services that offer "free" Web site hosting, but require sites they host to display banners and/or contain links to other member sites, whether within a page or in a separate window that pops open when the site is visited. These services should be avoided entirely.

Domain Registration

Councils are encouraged to register their own domain names for their Web sites, as this level of ownership is customary among organizations similar in size and prestige to a BSA council. A registered domain name includes a top-level (org, com, net, etc.) and a second-level domain name (thecouncil, ourcouncil, etc.). The registered domain name is the familiar combination of these (thecouncil.org, roybusiness.com). Council top-level domain names should be registered in the "org" top-level domain (for non-commercial organizations) as opposed to "com" (commercial enterprise) or "net" (computer network) top-level domains.

*InterNIC (Network Information Center) is an independent agency that makes the roles, administers the registration process, and maintains the official database of registered Internet domain names. See <http://www.internic.net> for more information.

A council may, at its own discretion, issue third-level splits on their domain (camp.thecouncil.org, district3.thecouncil.org) to its own districts and/or facilities, or establish them for its own use, but should be cautioned that the council may be held accountable for the content of any site housed on a third-level split as if it were part of the council's own Web site, even though the content may not be hosted at the same location. Councils that do this are urged to monitor the content of such splits closely.

Control of Server Access

While it is common practice for volunteers to develop files and programs for the council Web site, a professional employee of the council should control the content of the Web site by maintaining sole access (FTP, telnet, etc.) to the files on the Web server as well as to any programmatic interface that provides the ability to add or edit content on the Web site and its ancillary services.

Control of Content

It seems to be common practice, and is reasonable, for a council's Web site to be governed by a committee including both volunteer and professional Scouters, and that this committee defines the goals of the Web site and determines the content and resources that will be published in pursuit of those goals.

All materials destined for the council Web site should be reviewed and approved by the top council professional staff before they are published. At the very least, the council's Scout executive, public relations director, and legal counsel should sign off on all content before it is presented to the public as part of the council's site.

District and Unit Web Sites

Guidelines for district and unit sites, and the decision as to whether districts and/or units may maintain officially representative sites at all, are completely at the discretion of the council. If these sites are permitted, and especially if the council site provides links to them, it is highly recommended the council provide guidelines for these sites and to recognize and link only to those sites that meet the council's guidelines. Guidelines and advice provided in this document may be appropriate for districts and units as well, so councils may consider passing this information along with any additional council guidelines.

District Sites. The degree of a district's identity to membership and to the public should be the primary factor in deciding whether it would be useful to have separate sites for each district. This largely depends on how districts have been marketed, which may differ among councils. Specifically, if the identity of districts to participants and supporters is such that they identify themselves as members/supporters of "the X district of Y council," having stand-alone sites to support district-level marketing and service initiatives may be worthwhile. Otherwise, it is recommended that the council support its districts on the council Web site, accommodating unique information for the districts (such as calendars, contact information, etc.) in district pages or sections.

The best solution may be for the council to provide districts "directory-level" Web sites (www.council.org/district), so that districts could have a self-contained module of information that suits the needs and goals of the district, but enables the council to control the information published by its districts just as closely as any other information on the council site.

Unit Sites. It is not recommended that councils acknowledge "official" sites for units. There are currently tens of thousands of unit Web sites on the Internet, and it would be difficult for a council to allocate sufficient resources to monitor all the various sites developed by units in its area. Furthermore, since most units lack adequate resources to develop respectable and safe Web sites, a vast majority of unit sites are wrought with safety and liability issues that could become problems for the council were the sites endorsed as officially representative.

While it is permissible, by the guidelines, to provide links to sites that provide content that is appropriate to the Scouting movement, it is especially important to clarify (perhaps through an explicit disclaimer) when linking to Scouting-oriented sites that units as well as youth and adult members do not represent or serve as agents of the Boy Scouts of America when disseminating information over the Internet.

The safest course of action would be for the council to remain completely uninvolved in and, inasmuch as possible, unaware of any Internet publication produced by any group or individual not authorized to serve as a representative of the council or the Boy Scouts of America in the online medium.

Interactivity

In these guidelines, interactivity means direct communication via the Web site among a council's personnel, its membership, and the public.

National Council Perspective

The National Council has chosen not to provide contact information on its Web site because usually it is more appropriate for people to contact their local council rather than the National Council. Exceptions are made very rarely, on individual pages where under normal circumstances the content makes it appropriate for individuals to contact the National Council directly.

Conversely, local councils communicate directly and bilaterally with program participants, volunteers, and the general public through other media, and it would be just as appropriate for the council to extend this practice to the Internet. The lack of interactivity on the National Council site should not be construed to imply a policy that applies to councils.

Audience Location and Council Boundaries

Due to the worldwide reach of the Internet, a local council can interact with the members of other councils and with the public outside its geographic domain. Communication across those boundaries could create or worsen problems between councils. Councils are advised to avoid Web site content and Internet communication that might affect another council adversely, such as taking resources (sales, financial or volunteer support) from other councils or "seeding" volunteer/professional disagreements over interpretation of council policies or practices that differ.

There has never been an incident that made it necessary to establish a "non-interaction" policy for local councils. To prevent such an incident from occurring, councils are urged to make it a policy that early in any interaction they will determine the physical location of the other party and when appropriate they will refer individuals to the appropriate local council. (Note that the guideline prohibiting electronic sale of Supply Division merchandise is intended to help protect all councils' markets.)

Though a site visitor's location is not immediately evident, and technology provides no definite way to determine it, here are a few techniques to help councils determine the geographic locations of their Internet correspondents:

- Any on-line form that enables the user to communicate back to the council can ask (even require) the visitor to give their city and state.
- A password may be provided to council members to ensure resources in one or more "restricted" areas are viewed and used only by the council's own members.
- In any dialogue (such as an e-mail exchange), it may be necessary to ask.

On-Line "Conversation"

Chat, guest books, and bulletin boards are three forms of interactivity that are generally inadvisable for council Web sites because they require dedicated resources to monitor and control them sufficiently.

Chat Rooms

These are on-line forums in which users "converse" by typing messages to one another in real time. Recent advances have also made it possible to audio- or videoconference on the Internet. The first concern for councils should be youth protection issues; also "chat" makes it impossible for councils to control the text content of their sites. Because conversations take place in real time, messages are immediately posted to the site for others to view.

Also, because chat participants are anonymous, often there is much less discretion exercised than in most forms of conversation.

We recommended that councils avoid “live conversation” technology altogether. If it seems necessary for a special purpose, protective measures should be taken, such as

- A "chat" forum could be open only during certain time periods
- Access to the forum could be restricted so that only those who have been given a password may participate
- An authorized moderator could stay online and eject participants who break the rules
- Software countermeasures could censor speakers on-the-fly.

Even with such measures, negative incidents can occur.

Guest Books

Guest book programs allow site visitors to leave a message, and are generally not a problem unless the log file (which contains all the comments visitors enter) is visible to the public. In that case, anyone can add text, graphics, and even programmatic components to the council's Web pages that will immediately be viewable to other visitors. If a guest book is used, the log file should be kept in a location that is not visible to other visitors, but which must be downloaded using administrative software (Telnet/FTP) in order to be read. The council should then review that material before posting it to a publicly accessible interface.

Bulletin Boards and News Groups. These are a form of chat in slow motion: Users post messages and others may read and respond at a later time. Bulletin boards have the same inherent risks as chat, but since conversations do not occur in real time, there is opportunity for better moderation. Users may be allowed to send their remarks to a private section of the Web site, but the remarks should not be posted to the site for others to read until the council has approved the content for publication on its site.

Electronic Commerce

Councils are prohibited from engaging in the sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise or competing products via the Internet. This should not prevent councils from promoting their Scout shops or the merchandise they sell, but the actual purchase should take place off-line.

Though electronic sales of items other than Supply Division merchandise or competing products has not been prohibited, it is discouraged unless the council has the resources to develop a secure e-commerce system.

Privacy and Youth Protection

The Internet is perceived as a threat by some individuals, and they are vehemently opposed to having their images or personal information available to others. This perception is not unjustifiable, as demonstrated by periodic media coverage of predators who exploit the Internet to select, locate, and contact their victims.

Collecting Personal Information

Councils are urged to be discreet when collecting personal information via their Web sites. Privacy is a delicate issue on the Internet, and many people are reluctant to use sites or interfaces that require them to provide personal information such as their name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, etc. We recommend that councils avoid using the Internet to gather this information about users unless it is necessary to accomplish the user's goals. For example, you would have to request a telephone number and contact name from an organization that wishes to be contacted about starting a unit, but it should not be necessary that they provide this information merely in order to read information about starting a unit.

It is especially important to treat contact information carefully: contact information should be used only for the purpose for which it was provided. It is unethical and in some cases illegal to use this data for any solicitation or communication outside the context in which it was provided. The issue is particularly serious regarding contact information for children under 13.

The Federal Trade Commission recommends that charities and companies that collect personal information from online visitors use the following set of four standards--known as "fair information practices"---in creating privacy policies to post on their Web sites:

1. **Notification.** Visitors to the Web site should be notified as to what personal information is being gathered, how that information is used by the organization, and with what third parties, if any, the organization will share it.
2. **Choice.** Visitors should be provided with a means by which to contact the organization or take other actions to ensure that their personal information is not shared, if they so choose.
3. **Security.** Users of the site should be notified of the means by which the organization protects personal information, including protection from any misuse, alteration, or access by unauthorized users. Organizations should strive to ensure that the same level of privacy protection is extended by any third parties with whom they share individuals' personal information.
4. **Access.** Web site users should have reasonable access to any personal information about themselves that the organization holds, as well as a means of correcting or amending the information if it is inaccurate

Providing Personal Information

Regarding e-mail specifically, there remains the potential for a flood of correspondence to overwhelm the council staff if e-mail addresses are published on the Web site. The presence of e-mail addresses on a majority of council sites would seem to suggest that this potential has not become an actual problem, but a council should be prepared to react, possibly by removing contact from its site or even shutting down the mailbox, if problems do occur.

Contact information should only be published for a reason--specifically, whether there is a valid need for the members and/or the public to speak directly with a given individual because of that person's role in the organization. The council's policy should address these three groups separately, for these reasons:

Youth Participants and Parents

Contact information for youth participants should never be provided on the Internet. If the council wishes to maintain contact information for youth participants, it is strongly recommended that these lists are kept entirely off-line.

Concerning e-mail addresses in particular, councils should be aware that there are computer programs that crawl the Internet compiling lists of e-mail addresses that appear on Web pages. These lists are often sold to e-mail marketers who regularly send unsolicited advertisements, primarily for pornography and pyramid schemes. It is recommended that councils that wish to provide e-mail contact information utilize techniques to prevent or minimize this unfortunate side effect (such as "escaping" characters or using CGI scripts that maintain the actual addresses in a safe location).

Adult Volunteers

Contact information for adult volunteers should be treated with extreme caution, as it is likely this information will be personal in nature (home addresses, residential telephone numbers, and private e-mail accounts). If this information is made available on the Web site, it would be preferable to provide it in a password-protected area of the Web site to which the general public has no access. Exceptions may be made for those volunteers whom it would be necessary for third parties to contact in order to obtain information about joining, starting, or supporting individual units.

It is strongly recommended that this information be published only after obtaining written authorization, and that these individuals should know that they can (and how to) request the prompt removal of their information at any time.

Council Employees

Potential liability issues arise for the council as an employer if a third-party exploits information such as individual telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to harass or threaten employees. For that reason, it is recommended that the council provide only its main telephone number and generic e-mail addresses ("webmaster@council.org", "info@council.org", "contact@council.org", etc.) on its Web site.

Personal contact information, home telephone numbers, addresses, and private e-mail accounts-for council employees should be treated with the same discretion as that of adult volunteers.

Photographs and Names

While councils may publish any photographs they own or have received permission to reproduce (see "Third-Party Material,"), it would also be prudent to obtain specific permission before using anyone's photograph on the council's Web site. (Permission of the adult subject or of a parent/guardian in the case of youth participants).

This concern is separate from copyright ownership issues; the council may have the right to use the photograph on the Internet, but the person who is the subject of the photograph may be opposed to having their likeness on the Internet. And so, while obtaining specific permission for using an image on the Internet is not necessary to have the "rightto do so, it is certainly a worthwhile consideration in order to maintain good relations with members.

When using photographs of members, especially youth, it is also important to consider their safety and privacy when choosing captions or ancillary text. Some councils have established policies that no names will be associated with photographs at all, whereas others have a "first name only" policy for youth under a certain age, but allow the full names of adult leaders and older Scouts to be published.

Web Site Content

The content of council Web sites generally falls into two categories: marketing material presented to generate and direct public interest in joining or supporting programs, and service material presented for existing members. Both are valid and useful applications of Interact technology.

Non-Exclusivity

Though the Internet is a popular medium, and though its popularity continues to increase at an astounding rate, it's important to remember that it is not yet a universal medium. While the council's Web presence may support traditional channels of distributing information, it should not replace them, and should be treated as a secondary (rather than preferred or exclusive) channel of communication with members and volunteers.

Content Sources

It is important to know the original source of all council Web site content and to be sure the council has permission to use it. The only content the council owns outright are the text, photos, illustrations, design, and programming developed by the council's employees in the course of their jobs. Permission must be given by the owner for using all other material.

National Council Publications

Local councils may reproduce the content of any BSA "bin resources" publication they feel is appropriate for their sites' audiences. However, councils may not replicate any part of any publication currently for sale through the Supply Division. The difference between "bin" and "supply" items may seem unclear for those items the council purchases but then redistributes without charge to its members. Item numbers provide a reliable method of differentiation: bin items have five-digit numbers separated with a hyphen (00-000) whereas Supply Division items have four or five digits (the first is typically a 3 or 4) that are not separated by a hyphen (0000 or 00000). (This document is a bin item; the bin number is printed on the bottom of the contents page.)

Specific exceptions to this rule have been made so that approved council Web sites can link to certain Supply Division forms (medical forms, tour permits, certain applications, etc.) that are posted on a hidden location on the National Council site. Likewise, the Guide to Safe Scouting, a Supply Division item, has been approved for approved council Web site links. Such exceptions are rare, but always focus on service to members through the local council.

Content of Boys' Life and Scouting magazines should never be reproduced on council Web sites without first obtaining permission from the Magazine Division. Many articles and images are included in the magazines under limited license and copying them could violate copyright law. Councils may employ "frames" technology to include either magazine's pages from the National Council site into the council site, but should never copy any magazine files or text excerpts or images without explicit permission. To do so could be costly and illegal.

Third-Party Material

If a council wishes to include any content (whether text, photographs, illustrations, design, or programming), that is not developed by council employees or by third parties under the terms of a contract or agreement with the council, it is important to obtain written permission from the owner of that material. Even if the material is owned by a volunteer and is provided with the understanding it will be used in the council's site, this is important.

In its simplest form, this written permission can be provided in a letter that explicitly states that the owner will permit the council (or the Boy Scouts of America) to use the material. It is also common to indicate the duration (dates) for which the permission is granted, the medium (media) in which the reproduction may occur, and any restrictions that may apply.

Materials from Other Web Sites

Reusing material found on the Internet is especially dangerous! It is all too common for amateur Web publishers to take copyrighted material and reproduce it on their own Web sites and say that it is "free" or "public domain." A written agreement is prudent, regardless of any explicit disclaimer on a Web site, before using any material downloaded from the Web. It is especially important to obtain permission in advance for materials used on the Internet. Unlike newsletters, which are distributed only to members, the Internet is available to the public, and it is inevitable that the owner will discover your use of their material on your Web site.

Photographs

For photographs taken by council personnel or by photographers hired by the council, a "talent release" should be obtained for every person shown in the photos. (Even if you don't plan to use a photo now, someone might want to use it later.) Appendix A is a talent release form similar to that used by the National Council. This particular release obtains permission for the Boy Scouts of America (the National Council, any local council, district, or unit) to use the image in any medium. You may use it as is by photocopying it onto your council or other letterhead, or customize it to obtain rights for your council only or for only certain media if you wish. It is especially important to obtain this release, with the signature of a guardian, for youth.

While obtaining the permission of the owner (photographer) of an image or obtaining talent releases for photographs taken by the council is adequate to satisfy ownership issues, it is also prudent to obtain the permission of the subject(s) specifically to use their likeness on the Internet. See "Photographs and Names" under "Privacy and Youth Protection" for more detailed information.

Links to Other Web Sites

In general, councils should be cautious about linking to other Web sites. A user may follow a link from the council's site to another, which links to another, and another..., and the chain of links may lead to a site that contains unacceptable content. Though experienced users recognize the ownership of Web pages, inexperienced ones may feel the council is culpable for content they are exposed to after clicking links that lead them several sites removed from the council's site.

The safest course of action would be not to link at all. At the very least, councils should review any site to which they link to ensure its content is appropriate to the Scouting movement, and should be prepared to delete links in a timely manner in the event the content of these sites changes.

Another significant implication about links is that a link to a third-party site implies an endorsement. It will be assumed that the council endorses the content for use by its audience, which is primarily composed of its membership. For this reason, councils should be especially cautious about making links to sites of certain kinds:

www.bsa.scouting.org

Linking to the national site from the council site is not necessary, nor is it recommended. As Scouting programs are administered on the local council level, the local council should be the primary source of information, in every medium, to individuals in its geographic area. If a council wishes to make resources from the National site available to its own visitors, the preferred method would be to import these resources directly into the council site (by use of frames technology as described at <http://www.bsa.scouting.org/site/frames.html>). This will give the perception that the information is coming from the local council and will keep visitors "inside" the council site rather than sending them "up" to the National Council site via a standard hypertext link.

District and Unit Sites

A council's link to a district or unit site connotes that the council has authorized that district/unit site and that it is officially representative. While these links may be made, the council should ensure these sites are acceptable before providing a link and should monitor the sites periodically.

Third-Party "Scouting" Sites

There are numerous Scouting-oriented sites on the Internet that are not maintained or authorized by the BSA. These sites provide a wealth of general-interest information on topics of interest to members and program participants (camping, games, songs and skits, crafts, etc.). Some of these sites also provide information such as program helps, advice for leaders, requirements, procedures, forms, publications, ceremonies, and other resources that would seem to be of an official nature, but which are not authorized by the BSA. In some cases, this information is misleading or incorrect, and could cause conflict with members who refer to unofficial sources the council "endorsed." Worse, these sites may suggest activities that are unacceptable or unsafe by BSA standards.

Third-Party Commercial Sites

While many commercial sites provide valuable information of a non-commercial nature, councils should be careful when linking to these sites to avoid the impression that the council is endorsing commercial products or services. Annotation often makes the difference, as in this example: A link to xyzboots.com (the XYZ Boot Company's home page) appears to be a commercial endorsement. If you added the sentence "The XYZ Boot Company provides excellent advice for avoiding hiking injuries," and then linked directly to the page about avoiding hiking injuries, you clarify that the council endorses the information the company is providing rather than the product it is selling.

Sites with "Free" Services

"Free" site components tend to be commercial. Certain sites offer services such as statistics, hit counters, guest books, animations, and the like to other Web sites. Like the bogus "awards," sites and sites offering "free" Web space or e-mail, the primary purpose of these giveaways is to advertise and plant links to the "donor" site on a wide range of Web sites in order to draw audience away from its "benefactors." Of course, there are plenty of legitimate reference Web sites as well. The best approach when you consider linking to a site is to "click through" the site while asking yourself, "Why are they offering this service? What do they want from me? The answer should tell you whether you want to link to the site or not.

Content and Links to Avoid

Advertisements and Banners

Councils are prohibited from endorsing commercial products or services in any medium, including the Internet. Banner advertisements for commercial products and services are thus inappropriate for council Web sites.

Another popular type of banner on the Internet provides site owners with free promotion on other Web sites in exchange for promoting other sites on theirs. Though not strictly a commercial endorsement, these banners remain unacceptable because they provide a highly visible link from the council site to others, and the council does not control either the graphic that is displayed or the site to which it links - one or both may be patently inappropriate.

Web Site Awards and Certification

There are a number of Web sites that offer "awards" or "certification" for other sites. These awards/certifications often require the honoree to display an URL or provide a click-through link that promotes the grantor's site. In many cases, such "honors" are ploys to draw traffic to other sections of the grantor's site, with a commercial or political motive. These should be avoided.

Learning for Life Content

In 1998, Learning for Life became a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America, and the National Council has completely separated the Learning for Life and Exploring programs from traditional Scouting programs in terms of its marketing and materials. On the Internet, the National Council maintains a separate Web site for all information about Learning for Life programs: <http://www.learning-for-life.org>.

This effort should also be supported on the council level: Information about Learning for Life and Exploring should be provided on an entirely separate Web site--or, failing that, a self-contained site within the council's Web space until a transition to a stand-alone site can be made.

There should be no mention of Learning for Life or Exploring on traditional Scouting sites, or vice versa, in terms of text content, photographs, images, etc., and the sites should not promote or link to one another after a period of transition has elapsed.

Appendix

Appendix A. Talent Release

This form is provided ready for reproduction on council letterhead.

Appendix B. Copyright Permission Examples

These examples may be followed or adapted to suit specific requests.

Appendix C. Standards for the National Council Web Site

These standards apply to the Boy Scouts of America National Council Web site and are provided here as reference for developing local council standards.

Date: _____

Talent Release

I hereby assign and grant to the Boy Scouts of America the right and permission to use and publish the photographs/film/video tapes/electronic representations and/or sound recordings made of me this date by the Boy Scouts of America, and I hereby release the Boy Scouts of America from any and all liability from such use and publication.

I hereby authorize the reproduction, sale, copyright, exhibit, broadcast, electronic storage and/or distribution of said photographs/film/video tapes/electronic representations and/or sound recordings without limitation at the discretion of the Boy Scouts of America and I specifically waive any right to any compensation I may have for any of the foregoing.

Please Print Clearly:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone number: _____ Photo session date: _____

Unit number: _____ BSA Council: _____

Signed: _____

Guardian: _____

Witness: _____

(if subject is younger than 18)

Appendix B

Copyright Permission Examples

Obtaining the right to republish material (illustrations, photographs, multimedia, text, etc.) from other original sources is usually fairly easy: Send a letter to the owner of that material requesting permission. The letter's tone may be formal or informal, but it should contain these elements:

- A specific description of the material
- A printout or photocopy if applicable
- The specific purpose(s) for which it will be used
- When or how many times you plan to use it, if that might be an issue

If the request is not on council letterhead, it would also be important to indicate that permission is being sought for the council to use the material, rather than for the individual author of the letter to use the material.

It is important to understand that you do not have the right to use these materials until you receive a reply from the owner that grants permission. Also, if the owner sets any conditions or limitations, you must abide by them. For example: if the owner granted permission for the request in Example B below, but asked to be notified by e-mail of the URL of any unit site that also used the images, you would be required, as a condition of having the right to use the material, to send those notifications. Or permission might be granted only for a limited time, after which you could not use the material.

Finally, keep a copy of your request, along with the reply, on file just in case there is ever a dispute.

Example A. Simple Request

I am seeking your approval for the XYZ Council of the Boy Scouts of America to use three photographs of mountains and a lake from your Web site at <http://www.website.com/bobsmith/>. I would also like to use the descriptive text that accompanies them. I've attached printouts from the site to indicate the precise images and text to which I'm referring.

I would like to use these images on the "outdoor skills" page of the XYZ Council's Web site (<http://www.xyz-bsa.org>).

Example B. Request for Multiple and Unlimited Uses

I am seeking your approval for the XYZ Council of the Boy Scouts of America to use an illustration from page 34 of Teaching Archery (Doe, John. Teaching Archery, XYZ Press, 2000). The illustration depicts a young man stringing a bow. Attached a photocopy to show the image to which I'm referring.

If you can grant the council permission for unlimited use of the illustration, we would use it in several ways:

1. I'd like to place it on the "outdoor skills" page of the XYZ Council's Web site (<http://www.xyz-bsa.org>).
2. Since some of our packs and troops use images from the council site, I hope it would also be acceptable for them to use this image as well.
3. We would like permission to use the photograph in a booklet on the outdoor skills areas of our council camp. The booklet will be given free of charge to our members. We will include an acknowledgement in the form you prefer with each use of the illustration and we will be happy to pay postage costs and reproduction costs, if any, for a print-quality copy of the drawing.

Appendix C

**Standards
for the
National Council
Web Site**



**National Council
Boy Scouts of America**

Standards for the National Council Web Site, Boy Scouts of America

Site Ownership

The BSA Web site is provided by the Electronic Publishing Division as a medium through which all departments in the National Council may publish information via the Internet.

The **site shell** (home pages, menu system, and navigation resources) will be maintained by the Electronic Publishing Division. The purpose of these interfaces is to guide the appropriate audiences to the array of materials available in a manner that is logical to the user and equitable to the content providers. The primary goals of the site shell are

- **To support marketing efforts** so that the Marketing group may utilize the site as a promotional vehicle
- **To enable all departments** to publish via the Internet so that there is a logical location for any resource any department wishes to publish, and so that all material may be located via a logical system of navigation.
- **To ensure the site is accessible** so that Internet users may find the site and, once there, the specific resources they see.
- **To attract and develop an audience for the site**

The site content (actual informational content of the site) is owned by various departments within the National Council, each of which publishes one or more modules of information in support of its own goals.

Server Access

The BSA Webmaster maintains sole access privileges (FTP/Telnet) to alter files on the Web server. Should it become necessary or convenient to provide others the ability to maintain data on the server, options such as administrative interfaces or limited-access FTP accounts may be considered.

Authorization

There is currently no set of guidelines or policies regarding the nature of content that may be published via the Internet. Individual projects must undergo a process of approval that requires the signatures of the appropriate account executive and director of Electronic Publishing, the director of Relationships and Marketing, the directors of the requesting division and its parent group, legal counsel, the assistant Chief Scout Executive, and the deputy Chief Scout Executive. If alterations to existing content exceed simple maintenance and updates, these alterations must also be submitted through the approval process.

Note that the Web site communications approval process is somewhat different from the communications/distribution approval process for printed material--what is approved for publication in one medium is not necessarily acceptable for publication in another.

**The Internet publishing standards beginning on this page
apply to the BSA National Council Web site,
<http://www.bsa.scouting.org>.**

Content

Content standards pertain to the text, graphic, and multimedia content of Web site interfaces.

Content Ownership

Each department within the National Council selects the information and resources it wishes to publish via the Internet, and has complete authority over its content modules, subject to the following limitations:

- All content additions must be submitted through an approval process (see "Authorization" on page 16) before publication
- Content modules must collocate: they must support site-wide design conventions, function as "parts" of a larger whole, and support the standards for Internet publishing as communicated in the present document. No information will be placed on the site for any third party without the sponsorship of one of these departments.

Editorial Standards

The editorial standards that apply to printed publications also apply to the text content of Web publications. In practice, most of the copy that has been placed on the BSA Web site has been drawn directly from printed publications that have already been edited for conformance to these standards. When material is being published directly to the Internet, its text content should be reviewed by a copy editor in the Electronic Publishing Division prior to publication via the Internet.

Because of the uniqueness of the medium, there are a few guidelines in addition to those for printed material:

1. Web page URLs and e-mail addresses should be set in a mono-spaced typeface (courier or similar). Append the protocol (<http://>) to URLs and omit default filenames such as `index.html` or `default.htm`
2. Metadiscourse, especially the dread "click here," should be avoided. Rather than displaying "click here to view the glossary", the word "glossary" will suffice - if a text serves as a link, the browser will display it in a different color (often underlined as well), thus any blatant declaration would be redundant.
3. Fractions are not presently supported within the users' capabilities. If possible, convert fractions to decimal values. If this is not desirable, include a space between and whole and fractional amounts (e.g. 1 1/2 inches rather than 1 1/2 inches)

Graphic Standards

Graphics appearing in Web pages are primarily subject to standards detailed in the context of two other categories: design standards (pertaining to their appearance) and technical standards (pertaining to physical size and download speed). In addition to the criteria provided in the context of those sections ...

- As the Web is a visual medium, color photography and illustrations are preferred to two-color (black-and-white) versions.
- Because legibility at low resolutions is difficult to achieve, most informational charts and graphs are not suitable for publication on the Web, and may require considerable rework (complete rebuild) to be legible.

Multimedia

Though it is possible to include multimedia (sound and motion) elements into a Web interface, few users have the necessary connection and software to utilize most multimedia formats presently available. In most cases, multimedia should be presented as ancillary "click and play" files rather than embedded in a standard page.

There are some low-bandwidth techniques (DHTML, GIF89A, Java) for simple animation, designed to be loaded as part of an interface rather as a stand-alone "movie" file. It is acceptable to use these so long as the entire page can still be accommodated within the 60K ceiling and is usable by a majority (90%) of the site's audience.

Interactivity

In most cases, interactive features, which allow users to send information upline or enable communication between the National Council and the public or membership, are not permitted on the BSA Web site, largely because these same people should contact their local council rather than National.

Direct communication with site visitors has been approved in very few instances, in which the normal channel of communication would be direct to national. For example, site visitors were able to send their name and address upline to request an information packet about the world Scout jamboree--these same people would have contacted the National Council for this information, as it was not provisioned through the council distribution system.

Data provided via the Web site is provided directly to the department that owns the interface that collects the information. Departments are urged to be discreet when this information includes contact information. Specifically, contact information should be used only for the purpose for which it was provided, it is unethical, and in some cases illegal (especially when contact information for children under 13) to use this data for any solicitation or communication outside the context in which it was provided.

Structure and Design

Standards for site structure and interface design are provided to ensure new content fits neatly into the existing site. These standards are largely dependent on the overall site strategy and design conventions, which may change when the site as a whole is redesigned. The following standards suit the Web site's present design.

Site Structure

The BSA Web site consists of five separate, self-contained Web sites:

1. Information for the general public ("About the BSA")
2. Information and resources for program participants ("Youth Participants")
3. Information and resources for adult volunteers ("Adult Volunteers")
4. Recruiting-oriented information for individuals interested in joining or supporting a unit ("Sign Up for Scouting")
5. Resources for professional Scouters that cannot, for whatever reason, be accommodated by ScoutNet2000 ("Extranet")

The BSA Webmaster maintains high-level elements such as the site's design, navigation structure, and entire body of "universal" resources and interfaces. The content of the site, meanwhile, is owned and maintained by divisions within the National Council. In that way, divisions provide self-contained modules of information that are linked, as appropriate, from navigation interfaces within one or more of the five "major" sites.

It is possible for these modules to function as self-contained sites. For example, the International Division's suite (<http://www.bsa.scouting.org/internafionalO>) functions as a self-contained Web site, as do the Venturing Division's pages, Boys' Life and Scouting magazines, the Supply Division's promotions, and other content modules. It is important to emphasize that, while these modules function like self-contained sites, their primary purpose is to provide content in the context of the National Council site.

Information modules are linked into the site as appropriate. Because each module is self-contained, it may be linked as necessary or desired from one or more of the first four sites. There are a few restrictions:

- The "splash screen," i.e., the first page viewed when the user arrives at <http://www.bsa.scouting.org/>, divides the audience into four sections. No links to content are presented here.
- The first page of each content area serves as a menu for that content area, which should be considered as the "home page" for that specific audience. It contains no links to individual content areas except for a small number of "featured" selections, which receive a graphic and link at the top of the page. To date, there has not been a problem with numerous departments wanting their content to be permanently featured here. If this occurs, it may become necessary to define specific criteria that determines whether a module may be featured.
- Navigation pages provide menus of links to content pages. There have been a few instances when a request was made to add a brief announcement to one of the menus without any click-through. This is not done. (A good analogy is that the navigation interfaces are a table of contents, hence no informational verbiage is placed.)

Finally, each module belongs to the department that created it, and modifications cannot be made without that department's consent. For example, if Cub Scouting wanted to make an alteration to the "What is Cub Scouting?" fact sheet, they would need to work through External Communications (who owns the Fact Sheets), who would then request that the page be changed. This applies to changes that would require altering the content of another department's material--it does not exclude providing a link from one's own module to another department's (though permission from the second department would be required to make a link in the other direction).

Design Standards

Standards for visual design are very flexible. The only required element for the content of Web pages is a standard footer containing the BSA logo, identification, and URL. Also, the design of pages must accommodate the site's navigation sidebar both in terms of their physical dimensions (width of the "page" on screen) and design (pages should not clash). White or neutral-colored page backgrounds are preferred, as information modules may also be presented in the context of local council sites' interfaces, whose color schemes will vary widely.

Also, information modules should be designed to be modular. Specifically, they should not depend on graphics located in other modules; i.e., if a module is to contain a graphic contained within another module, a duplicate copy should be made in that module's directory. Granted, this is inefficient in terms of storage and bandwidth usage, but it avoids creating site-wide dependencies that cause some pages to "break" if others are altered or deleted.

Aesthetic Standards

To date, the majority of documents published on the BSA Web site have been adapted from hardcopy publications and have been converted to retain a semblance, inasmuch as possible in the medium, of their original design.

As it is not possible to verbally describe the criteria of a visual aesthetic, all decisions as to whether any interface is acceptable for publication will be made by the BSA design director.

Technical Standards

Technical standards are provided to ensure the integrity and security of the Web site, and to ensure its usability by the majority of the audience. Because the technology itself changes over time, these standards will need to be updated periodically.

Code-Level Standards

To date, all programs and interfaces placed on the site have been developed or rebuilt by the BSA Webmaster, so there has been no need to develop detailed technical standards for Web interfaces and programs. Should any department wish to create or outsource the development of programs and interfaces, the BSA Webmaster will review them before placing them on the Web server, and will adjust or rebuild them as necessary to ensure they are optimal and secure.

End-User Accommodation

In terms of both design and technology, Web pages should be suited for display given the following minimum parameters:

- Terminals running Macintosh or Windows operating systems
- Monitor resolution of 640x480 pixels (remember the sidebar, though)
- Monitor depth of 256 colors (decorative elements may be grainy, but the informational content should be legible at this depth)
- "Third generation" Web browser (Netscape Navigator 3.0 and Internet Explorer 4.0) compatibility

In order to avoid excessive download speed, the total file size of an interface (all text and graphics) should not exceed 60 kilobytes. Some items may be presented as a single page, but most will need to be divided into a suite of pages. As a note, this is not inflexible -- in some cases, it may be necessary to exceed that limit (if the information can only be presented graphically, or if a large unit of data would not make sense if presented as smaller pieces).

Disabilities Awareness

The task of making the BSA Web site accessible to the disabled largely falls upon the developers of hardware and software solutions that make *any* Web site accessible by the disabled. The measure of success for such solutions is in their ability to make standard Web pages (without an unreasonable degree of accommodation on the part of the developer) accessible.

Pages on the BSA site should employ language-standard conventions (using alternate text to images, avoiding server-side image mapping and nested tabular layouts) to make materials as accessible and intelligible as possible to disabled users. However, going to extremes to accommodate any specific piece of hardware or software often excludes competing products. The degree of support for these products should be restrained to the same degree to which they rely upon the standard conventions of Web technologies.

The World Wide Web Consortium promulgates guidelines under its Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). These guidelines should be regarded as helpful advice rather than taken as factual standards. See <http://www.w3c.org/WAI>. (Note that WAI must be capital letters.)

Plug-Ins and Helper Applications

Ideally, Web interfaces should be usable with the Web browser alone; i.e., without the need for additional software to assist the browser in displaying an interface. This is not practical as a hard-and-fast rule due to the limitations of browser software. While requiring additional software cannot be forbidden, it is discouraged unless there is a compelling reason.

Projects that require plug-in or helper software are expected to be rare, so the BSA Webmaster will evaluate these requests on a case-by-case basis. The factors in determining whether it is acceptable to use a given technology include:

1. **Redundancy.** If an existing page requires additional software to accomplish a given task or effect, other pages with similar requirements should use the same software. (Example: we are already using QuickTime for video, and it is capable of streaming video, so there's no need to require Vivo or RealVideo for the same effect.)
2. **Necessity.** The user should receive a benefit from downloading the software. It should be necessary to content or resources of value rather than for any frivolous purpose. (A specific example of a "frivolous" technology would be plug-in software to change the cursor into a cutesy animation.)
3. **Availability.** The software must be available for the entire audience. An application available for Macintosh only is unacceptable, as a fair portion of the audience uses Windows.
4. **Stability.** The software must run reliably (without causing the browser or system to crash) on all platforms.
5. **Reliability.** The software must have been on the market for at least two years, and it must be used in the Web sites of other organizations similar in scope and prestige to the BSA.
6. **Cost.** The software should be available to our users free of charge.

Where content requires plug-in applications, it is necessary to provide a link to the manufacturer's site so that the visitor may obtain the software. Such links should be treated carefully, such that the manufacturer's license agreement is met and, at the same time, the link does not take the tone of a commercial endorsement.