

Internet Use by Grand Lodge and Lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Alberta

Introduction

With the advent of computers and their connection to the Internet and although even the largest governments of the world have recognized that it is not possible to control its use, it is appropriate that guidelines be established by the Grand Lodge of Alberta to assist its members in establishing a coherent consistent and appropriate message of Freemasonry while protecting the privacy of its members and maintaining the principles and landmarks of the Fraternity.

For these reasons, these guidelines have been developed.

Privacy

Freemasonry has always protected the names of its members from public view in the belief that should a brother wish to be identified as a Freemason, and we hope that all do, that it was his choice.

It is also fair to say that when a brother accepts a position with a Lodge or Grand Lodge that he accepts the fact that he is a “public” figure.

Recommendation

That written permission be obtained from a brother to allow any of his personal details, or any photograph where he is identified, to be shown on a public web site. Preferably, this permission should be signed but an email message showing the origin as the brother’s regular email address would suffice.

That personal information be not shared without the consent of the individual brother and that no form of membership list be made available for a non-Masonic purpose.

Web Site Content

It is critical that Web Sites provide a positive professional and accurate image of Freemasonry. The following will ensure a constant and consistent approach.

The Home or Welcome Page, ie, the first page to be displayed when entering the basic URL, must identify the Masonic entity which “owns” the page, normally the Lodge Name, an email address for the Webmaster to address technical and operational matters and an email address link for both public and members to obtain specific information relative to the Lodge owner’s area of knowledge.

Privacy Waivers be obtained and kept on file by the Webmaster relative to any private details of members listed on the site. These Privacy Waivers are considered an official document of the Lodge and may be reviewed by an appropriate Grand Lodge Officer or the Webmaster to the Grand Lodge.

All material copied from another source, whether on the internet or not, must contain a credit line acknowledging the original source. This is both a courtesy to the author(s) and a protection against misquotes and claims of copyright infringement.

Where there is a Guestbook, it must be checked on a regular basis and no less than weekly to ensure that no inappropriate entries are present. Such entries must be removed immediately.

Where any monetary transactions take place on the web, the complete transaction must be secure.

Information on a site should relate to the body “owning” the site. Wherever possible and practical, it should not be a duplicate of another site particularly a local one. In such cases a link to the original information should be provided. By this method, information is consistent between sites with any changes in the original site being available without having to change the secondary site.

Links to other sites must be limited to

- Masonic bodies with which the Grand Lodge of Alberta is in amity
- Masonic organizations which are recognized or supported by the Grand Lodge of Alberta; or
- Sites where there is a relevance to the Lodge or its members, eg. a site containing information associated with the name of the Lodge

It is recognized that “free” hosting services normally dictate that their advertisements are displayed with or on the hosted page. These advertisements must be reviewed by the Webmaster and must be consistent with the basic principles of Freemasonry. If they do not meet this standard, the site must be moved to a different hosting location.

Lodge Calendars may be displayed on the public portion of a Lodge Web Site but details of a particular nature, eg, the names and details of persons being balloted on or taking degrees, must be omitted.

A private portion, ie accessible only by password, which is changed monthly at a minimum, may contain a full Lodge Notice, Minutes of meetings which have not yet been adopted and authorized email addresses of members. The private portion must also contain code to prevent Search engine Web Spiders from indexing its contents.

The login id and password to the Private Portion of the site must only be supplied to brethren who have a legitimate reason to view the information.

Site Approval

All Lodge sites must be approved by the Webmaster to the Grand Lodge of Alberta. The approval is based on, but not limited by, adherence to these guidelines.

When approved, the site will be authorized to display, on their Home Page, a logo showing that approval and appropriate links from the Grand Lodge Site will be established.

Should the Webmaster not approve a site, the Lodge or Masonic group may appeal the decision to the Grand Master through the Grand Secretary.

Lodge Notices by email

Lodge Notices may be sent by email in place of regular mail, when the following conditions are met:

1. The written approval of the brother to receive his notice by this method.
2. The Notice will be in Adobe Reader pdf format or a similar “difficult to change” read-only format only.

Conclusion

Nothing in these proposed guidelines is intended to stifle the creative imagination of brethren in presenting an appropriate image of Freemasonry.

The purpose is to ensure that basic principles are observed and that the image created is professional and appropriate.