

2022 AFMS Website Contest—Score Sheet Guidelines

Important: To enter the 2022 Website Contest, please use only the 2022 Website Contest Entry Form and 2022 Website Contest Score Sheet. Also, be sure to use Adobe Reader (or Adobe Acrobat) version 10 or newer when filling out the forms. Those versions allow you to fill in the blanks, save the results, and then go back and edit the documents later if needed.

The Society Website serves several functions. Three of the major functions of the Website are:

- (1) **Attract new members**
- (2) **Provide member information**
- (3) **Assist the Society in fulfilling the Society’s Mission.** This includes public advertising of Society activities such as show, rock swaps, and meeting and guest speakers. Advertising is only one of the many functional capabilities to be assigned to the Website. Most Societies have the mission of educating the public, and they find that providing educational materials and links to educational sites for geologic and Earth Science information is a good use for the Website. Therefore, most of the items in this contest are emphasizing these items. ***This contest attempts to determine the effectiveness of the Society’s Website in providing information for these goals, not to determine the quality or capabilities of the Society.***

An effective Website can be created without requiring weekly or even monthly updates. However, a Website that is updated frequently might score more points in the Outstanding Features category. This contest does not require Websites be formatted to a specific format or template; it tries to give as much latitude as possible for freedom of expression. Hopefully in the future as we share more information, we will learn how and why some things work better for some Websites, and we will learn from the efforts of our fellow Societies. The Internet is constantly evolving, and the contest is not intended to limit this process.

A major contest goal is to provide support to the webmaster in balancing the content of the Web pages between internal Society administrative data and the data necessary to make the site useful to the visitor. The organization of the Website should separate general interest data (data useful to a visitor) from data that is of interest to current Society members. General interest data should be in the foreground.

These guidelines attempt to give a better explanation of each item being judged. The guidelines should also give the judges better uniformity as they score the Websites. The guideline also incorporates some helpful items for web design that are not required, but should be considered.

WEBSITE DISQUALIFICATION AND JUDGING CRITERIA GUIDELINES

1. DISQUALIFICATION CRITERIA

A. Society Name, Area Served

The Society's name must be on the Home Page with full name spelled out. Additionally, the Society's area served must be on the Home Page. This can be City and State, a County and State (if Society is not associated with a city), or (if the Society's service area is a region not defined by a City or County) a description of the Society's area served, or multiple combinations as necessary. If not found on the Home Page, the Website will be disqualified.

B. Contact Information

Contact information must be at least an e-mail address or a submit form. If a phone number is the primary contact information, it must include the area code. The Contact Information may be on the Home Page, Contact Page, About Page, or similar. The Contact Information should be no more than one click away from the Home Page. If Contact Information is not found easily, the Website will be disqualified. If the contact information is an email, the email address can be an image or may use Java Script or other techniques to prevent Web Crawlers from seeing the link. Some techniques for defeating Web Crawlers are presented in the Addendum pdf file, "EmailPhishingOptions".

C. Copyright violations

Any Copyright violations, including text and pictures, will result in the Website being disqualified. **Webmasters should be very careful in selecting text and pictures for online sources so as not to violate copyright protection. If in doubt, rewrite the text in your own words or select pictures only from site where license information is provided. Quoted text and pictures should include attribution.**

D. Website entered in more than one region

Any Website entered in more than one region will be disqualified from the contest in both regions. Disqualification will be determined by Regional/AFMS Committee.

2. REQUIRED ON HOME PAGE

A. Society Name and area served

See comments above regarding Society Name and Area Served above under DISQUALIFICATION.

B. Society Logo

The Society's logo should appear on the Website Home Page and it is desirable that it appear in the common information on each page. A minimum of 1 point will be deducted if Logo is not on the Home Page.

C. Federation Logo

Your Federation's logo should be displayed on your Home Page. It would be highly desirable for all the requirements of Section 1 of the score sheet (affiliation, Federation name spelled out, logo, and link) be included on the Home Page, but as a minimum an image of the Federation logo is required. The other requirements of section 1 can be on another page such as an "About" page, Society Information page, or similar.

D. AFMS Logo

The AFMS logo should be displayed on your Home Page. It would be highly desirable for all the requirements of Section 2 of the score sheet (affiliation, AFMS name spelled out, logo, and link) be included on the Home Page, but as a minimum an image of the AFMS logo is required. The other requirements of section 2 can be on another page such as an "About" page, Society Information page, or similar.

E. Meeting(s) date, time, and location

A potential member or visitor needs to be able to locate information about your Society's meeting(s) easily. Having the basic regular meeting information on your Home Page makes the information easy to find. More information about your meetings activities and speakers or a map to your meeting location can be on another page if desired. A minimum of 1 point will be deducted if the Society meeting information is not found on the Home Page.

3. VITAL SOCIETY INFORMATION

A. Society Mission or Purpose Statement

This information helps visitors learn quickly what the Society is about, and it is considered a highly important component of the Website. This usually includes information such as not-for-profit status, educational organization, areas of interest, etc.

B. Regular Meeting(s) date, time, and location

See discussion under “Required on Home Page” above.

C. Use of Society Logo

See discussion under “Required on Home Page”

D. Statement Concerning Whether Visitors are Welcome at Meetings.

A statement as to whether or not visitors are welcome at regular meetings is required. The statement must be easily found. It is highly desirable that it be included on the Home Page, but it may be on an About page, Meeting page, or similar.

E. Contact Information

See discussion under “Required on Home Page”

4. MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership application

A membership application form should be available. Complete costs and a full mailing address should be included on the form. If information is provided to apply for membership but there is no application form, allow a maximum of 50% of the available points.

B. Membership benefits

Benefits the Society provides to its membership should be listed in one location. The benefits of membership need to be encapsulated, itemized, and bulleted on either the Home Page or a comprehensive membership page detailing membership requirements, benefits, costs, etc. The site should function as a solicitation for new members and as a vehicle and instrument for promoting Society membership. The benefits of membership can be elaborated on in many ways on other informational pages but should be presented in a short, concise form as a benefits list on a prominent page. Points are based upon the information provided, not on the quality or number of benefits available to members.

C. Information for Members (shop information, newsletters, etc.)

In many cases, information can be considered information for visitors such as meeting dates and times. This item gives a range of freedom for the information actually provided. For instance, many Societies prohibit publication of newsletters, recent newsletters, field trip locations, etc. Some Societies might provide a private section on the Website for members only or on another site such as Yahoo Groups for members only. Society newsletters are increasingly making their way online at Society Websites where they can be both outstanding features and functional instruments in serving the needs of the Society members and site users. The goal of this item is that there should be a reason why members would visit the Website. Some examples include newsletters, shop information, constitution and bylaws, board and committee listing, information on upcoming meeting programs, a members’ only section or site, library listing, ordering of Society materials such as vests, name badges, etc.

5. FUNCTIONALITY

A. Website menu links all function properly

There should be some type of menu system to navigate between pages on the Website. Navigating the Website should not end up at a dead end with no navigation to other pages unless it is a PDF document or similar. All links to other pages on the Society’s Website should function. Broken links on the Society Website should be penalized and scored down much more heavily than broken external links.

B. Ease of navigating Website

How to navigate the Website should be relatively obvious. Finding most of the information required for this contest also should be relatively easy. Navigation should allow the visitors to navigate back to the Home Page in a reasonable manner.

C. For reporting a broken link, the webmaster's e-mail or a submit form is available on any page with links.

Webmaster contact information (e-mail) or a submit form should be easily found for the reporting of such problems. People finding the broken link probably will not go to the trouble of searching the Website for the webmaster's contact information, and a broken link is something that should be addressed immediately. It is highly desirable that the webmaster contact information be part of the common information, but must be on any page with links.

D. Links to relevant Websites (other Societies; gem, mineral, and fossil-related sites)

People visiting your Society's Website will likely also be interested in seeing the sites of other local Societies as well as the Websites of gem, mineral, and fossil-related interests.

6. COMPLETENESS AND QUALITY

A. Main pages appear up-to-date, and Home Page emphasis is on rocks, minerals, and hobby related activities.

Home Page needs to be up to date with emphasis on rocks and minerals and other rockhound-type information and photos. Bureaucratic information such as a listing of officers should not be on a Home Page. Main pages should place emphasis on items of current interest to members with up to date information. Including historical information is perfectly valid, but if the information is presented as current data, it should appear to be current data. For example, a listing of officers should be for the current time period, a historical or similar page could be used to list past officers. A show page should be for the upcoming show if it has been more than four months since the last show. A certain period of time is required to change advertising from one year's show to the next, and four months should be more than enough time to make this change. Another example would be a listing of the next month's meeting agenda—it should not be a listing for a meeting that has already happened. If the webmaster is updating the Website often enough for this type of announcement, it should not be out of date. Again, a reasonable turnaround time is required for updating this information, and it should be updated within one week of the information becoming outdated. The maximum deduction should only be deducted for serious issues. Similar judging criteria should be used for other information on the Website.

B. Common information on pages (Society Name, URL, etc.)

Some types of identifying information should be available on all normal web pages to identify the origin of the page. This could be the Society logo, Society name, URL, etc. Other items such as last updated, copyright, contact information, etc. are often also included on all pages.

C. Easy Readability (good contrast, consistency of font type and size, font size easy to read)

Text should be able to be read by the average person. Very low contrasts between the text and its background, or bold and poor backgrounds generate common readability problems. The font type and size should be consistent throughout the Website, and it should be easily read by the vast majority of viewers.

D. Literacy—Consistently correct spelling and grammar throughout Website

A Website with a number of misspelled words, poorly constructed sentences and poor grammar can lead visitors to form a low opinion of the entire site. Use a dictionary if you are not sure of the spelling of a word, and always carefully proof pages before uploading them. Then proof them again the next day. It is amazing how many errors you will find that you missed before.

E. Good use of graphics (including size—overly large graphics load slowly)

Graphics can add more visual appeal to Web pages. The overuse of graphics not only causes visual issues, but their size can cause slowly loading pages. In general, most images should be less than 50 k. Very large images observed on Web pages may be considered an inappropriate use if the image size obviously should be reduced. Deductions for this item should be limited to obvious problems.

Note: Resolutions greater than 72 DPI are not rendered in the Web browser, and higher resolutions can cause excessively large file sizes.

F. Site Domain is registered and property of the Society (www.ourSociety.org)

Is the site a registered domain located on a major server, or is the Website placed on a private party site subject to the owner's whims? The downside of registered domains is they are more expensive; registration fees are an ongoing expense. Registered domains are typically more expensive to host than a site hosted on a Society member's free personal Web space. The upsides to registered domains are numerous, perhaps the most important being that registered domains are durable and can be independently owned as intellectual property of the Society in perpetuity.

G. Information fulfills needs of Website visitors

This is a very broad item. Information on the Website should be of interest to visitors. This could include meeting information, local points of interest related to Society activities, newsletters, articles of interest, etc. The judge should consider the question, "Would a visitor find anything of interest on the Website?"

H. Overall appearance and attractiveness

This is a highly judgmental item, but even so, attention should be given to a consistent use of style and format. Remember that this item is judged as a deduction, so there should be a lot of freedom in the design of the Website.

7. OUTSTANDING FEATURES - GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND THE NORM

This item gives the opportunity for truly outstanding Websites to rank above other Websites that merely meet the stated requirements. The baseline for this item should be 0 points; points should be awarded for outstanding features of the Website. Few if any of the Websites should be awarded the maximum points (maximum is 10) for this item. Any points awarded should include a description of why the points were awarded. Possible examples include:

- sponsored scholarships
- educational resources
- completeness of show information
- use of a search engine to enhance Website functionality
- post of current and/recent Society newsletters
- community service
- galleries; activities
- Society and/or area history
- local collecting sites
- local museums of interest
- links to other local Societies (if any)
- links to external sites of interest to rockhounds, paleontologists, geologists, etc.

This is not an inclusive list. The awarding of Bonus Points for outstanding features is strictly at the discretion of the judge.