

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Department of Internet Ministry

June 2011 Report for the General Assembly

As the Church has always done, our Archdiocese uses the tools of our society to communicate with each other, and with the world beyond. In practice today, this includes engaging via the Internet.

Central to this work is the wisdom and expertise that exists across the workers and ministries of our Archdiocese, and the information and stories they need to communicate; the different audiences with different needs that make up the 50,000 monthly visitors to our website, Antiochian.org; and the technology platform that has been built to make this website possible.



History

The Department of Internet Ministry was created in 2008 to serve the communications needs of our Archdiocese by providing a professional-quality Internet publishing platform at our official website, www.Antiochian.org. The Archdiocese website had previously been built and maintained by the Department of Communications and Information Technology, before this department was closed and its responsibilities divided. In recognition of the need for our Archdiocese to make more fruitful use of new media, the Department of Internet Ministry was launched to focus exclusively on improving the presentation on the World Wide Web of our vibrant life and work.

Staffing

The staff of the department includes full-time director Douglas Cramer,

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part-time editors Ginny Nieuwsma and Andrew Frishman, and part-time technical consultant Mark Klinski. Douglas and Andrew are based in Santa Fe, NM; Ginny in San Jose, CA; and Mark in Indianapolis, IN. The team is in regular contact via phone and email, and makes use of software tools for virtual team project management. This staffing arrangement has been in place without turnover since 2008, allowing the team the opportunity to develop strong working relationships and productive processes.

General Responsibilities

Our work at the department falls in to several different categories: administrative, technical, design, and editorial. Ongoing work includes the development of website content, features and functionality in support of the Archdiocese headquarters, as well as our dioceses, departments and organizations. Original content is also continually being developed and special projects completed, including efforts in support of the pan-jurisdictional Assembly of Canonical Bishops of North and Central America.

Contributors

Our work requires us to continually engage with a range of contributors, for whom it is critical that we provide a publishing platform for their needs. Many people across the Archdiocese and the broader Orthodox world have contributed content to our site. In particular, we thank the following people for their ongoing contributions to Antiochian.org:

His Eminence Metropolitan Philip and his hierarchical assistant Fr. George Kevorkian; His Grace Bishop Basil and his assistant the monk Benedict; His Grace Bishop Thomas; His Grace Bishop Joseph and his assistant Michael Habib; Registrar Amy Robinson; Joanne Hakim and Michael Srour of the Order of St. Ignatius; Dept. of Christian Education director Carole Buleza; Dept. of Sacred Music director Chris Holwey; Conciliar Media director John Maddex; Dept. of Youth director Fr. Joseph Purpura; Dept. of Chaplains director Fr. George Morelli; and Mother Alexandra of the Convent of St. Thekla.

Meetings and Conferences

The editorial team of Douglas, Ginny and Andrew meet annually in Santa Fe. Douglas and Mark have attended the annual convention,

Drupalcon, dedicated to the Drupal software platform with which the Archdiocese website is constructed, for advanced training and networking. Douglas has also attended the biannual Archdiocese clergy gathering at the Antiochian Village.

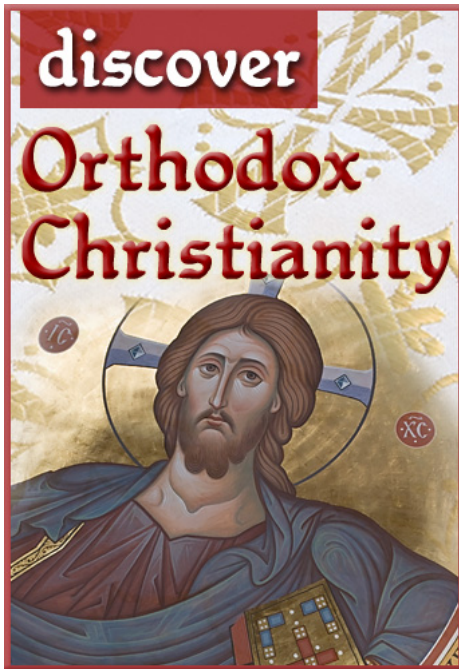
Site Audience

In late 2010, our department conducted an online reader survey that generated several hundred responses. The results of this survey have informed subsequent decisions and planning regarding content emphasis, design of directory resources, site navigation and more.

Antiochian.org site usage statistics for June 2010 through June 2011, via Google Analytics, mark our annual audience at approximately 920,000 site visits from 455,000 unique site visitors. A typical month will see traffic in the range of 75,000 site visits from 40,000 unique site visitors. Most of our traffic is to the site homepage, but other popular destinations include our parish directory, apologetics section, and liturgical and music resources.

Detailed survey results and site analytics are available on request.

Discover Orthodox Christianity

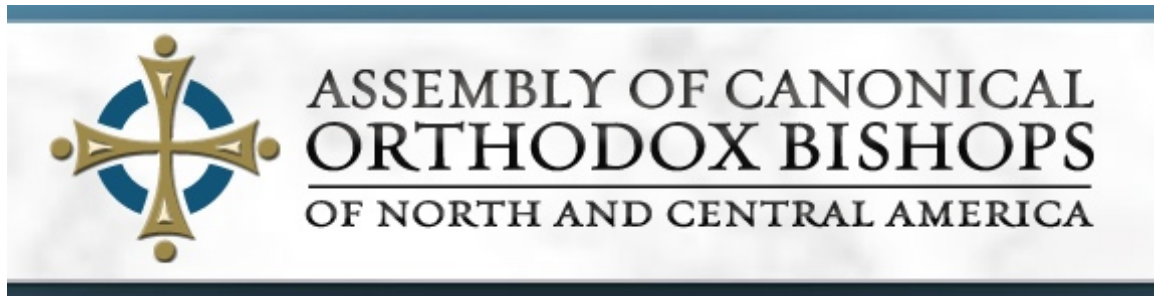


In April 2011, our department launched a new section dedicated to Orthodox Christian introductory articles and resources, at www.antiochian.org/discover. The section is the result of several months of planning and editorial and design work.

Education and evangelistic outreach is of the utmost importance to the bishops, clergy and laity of the Antiochian Archdiocese. In support of their efforts, Discover Orthodox Christianity now provides a topical library of links and reflections presenting the faith to site visitors in an engaging and accessible format. We hope this will be a useful tool for teaching of the faith, for both newcomers and for people who are rediscovering Orthodoxy.

Assembly of Canonical Bishops of North and Central America

Beginning in June 2010, our department joined a collaborative effort to create and maintain a website for the pan-jurisdictional Assembly of Bishops. Communication for the Assembly is coordinated by the Secretary of the Assembly, His Grace Bishop Basil. A small team of staff from our department and from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Internet Ministries works with the Secretary and his assistant, the monk Benedict, to build content and features available at www.assemblyofbishops.org.



Future Objectives

In March 2011, Metropolitan Philip asked each department of the Archdiocese to produce a detailed list of objectives, including methods for measuring their success, for the coming fiscal year beginning January 2012. This valuable process resulted in the following documented objectives for the Department of Internet Ministry, and is the primary driver of our plans for the coming year.

Rolling our objectives in to a single statement, in the coming fiscal year our department will seek to publish a large amount of content online using an effective technical infrastructure in a way that satisfies our clients, while executing a website redesign and growing our audience.

Objective 1: Content

Ongoing fulfillment of online content publishing commitments to approved submission sources; completion of large content

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development project requests; ongoing development and online publication of original content.

The first purpose of the department is ongoing communication, via our new media platforms, of timely and timeless information and stories pertaining to the life and work of the Archdiocese and her ministries. The Internet Ministry team primarily focuses on being effective editors and curators of content.

The primary dependency for successful ongoing content development is our reliance on key contacts at the entities of the Archdiocese with whom we can coordinate and collaborate. These contacts are often the originators of the material that is published online, and their own communication skills are essential to a successful process and online presence.

Objective 2: Technology

Ongoing maintenance of publishing platform technical infrastructure, to ensure superior website performance, security, and functionality; ongoing advance planning in anticipation of evolving technical landscape.

The primary software supporting the existing Archdiocese website is the state-of-the-art Drupal content management system (CMS). It is an open source architecture consisting of core software and selected add-on software modules that create an administrative interface used by editors to manipulate the underlying data residing on our host server environment. In 2011, we are working through a major upgrade of the Drupal software, from version 6 to version 7, and our critical installed modules. This upgrade project may continue in to 2012. Completion of this upgrade will initiate a period of the staff learning the improved toolset, and developing new functionality goals based on its capabilities.

To date, maintenance of our technical infrastructure has been greatly aided by the sophistication of the Drupal platform, which allows for much technical upkeep to be performed quickly, often by someone without a software development and programming skill set. We have emphasized editorial and content skill sets while developing staff, making it essential for us to make the most of a comparatively smaller investment in technical skills. Successful maintenance of our technology also relies on a healthy relationship with hosting provider NST, located in East Northport, NY.

Objective 3: Service

Quantifiable success in meeting and exceeding client expectations in such realms of service as ease of interaction with department staff, speed of issue resolution, effectiveness of implemented solutions, and more.

Closely related to the content creation driven by Objective #1 above, it is essential that our overall working relationships with those understood to form our internal client base are marked by a high level of satisfaction. External feedback on the performance of our department by those with whom we interact regularly can be gathered and used to better understand and improve our ongoing work; to clarify who exactly it is that we serve; and to identify opportunities for new needed creative projects.

In 2012, we will develop and execute a survey of key Archdiocese clients, including supported contacts at the headquarters, diocese, department and organizational levels. Conducting of in-depth personal interviews with a select number of key Archdiocese leaders about their judgment of Internet work to-date and vision for the future. Surveying and interviewing depend on a willingness of contacts at key constituencies to spend time thinking about and articulating the Internet-related aspects of their work.

Objective 4: Redesign

Planning and execution of a comprehensive graphical and information architecture redesign for the primary Archdiocese presence at www.antiochian.org.

The current design iteration for the Antiochian.org website was created by Douglas Cramer, implemented by technical consultant Mark Klinski, and launched in Spring 2009. A graphical and information architecture redesign in 2012 will create a new design layer for the primary Antiochian website, optimized for the then-current Drupal 7 software environment. It will also allow for identification and implementation of more current design elements consistent with an Orthodox Christian ethos, utilizing the most current design tools and outside consultation to update graphic styles, banners, fonts, menus, navigation and site organization, and all other aspects of a comprehensive design overhaul.

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The primary dependencies for a successful website redesign include feedback from Archdiocese leadership on which design concepts best fit with her communication goals, and the integration of outside design resources in to the workflow of existing department staff.

Objective 5: Audience

Planning and execution of a comprehensive plan to increase the size of our online audience base (currently approximately 50,000 unique visitors monthly to Antiochian.org), increase the length of time spent by our regular audience using online resources, and to expand overall the awareness and use of Antiochian-developed Orthodox Christian content.

A core element of the work of the department has always been the promotion of her work, via general Internet promotional techniques like search engine optimization, and relationship development encouraging other websites to link to Antiochian resources. While our department cannot control the overall level of interest in Orthodox Christianity in society, it can increase the contribution of the Antiochian Archdiocese to the broader online Orthodox Christian community.

Increasing the reach of an organization's online presence depends on the good will of those parties who are also online, and support the vision of the organization. As Archdiocese online resources continue to mature, it will be essential to cultivate awareness and support from Orthodox Christian ministries, parishes, pastors, and other online content creators across jurisdictions, in order to leverage the social capabilities of the Internet, and the social command of the Gospel.

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