Information Technology Committee

Documents in Advance 2024

Committee members: Daniel Buckmaster (NSWRM) - convenor; Holly Dhynes (QA), Garry Duncan (NSWRM), Roger Sawkins (QRM), Michael Searle (CRQ), Julie Walpole (TRM).

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Part A: Report of Achievements and Activities

The IT Committee has met via Zoom 18 times in the past year. Our activities since Yearly Meeting 2023 have included:
- Welcoming the new QA Communications & Publicity Manager, Holly Dhynes
- Continuing development of a new membership directory using the Knack platform
- Completing a rebuild of our enquirers website using Wordpress
- Investigating options for migrating our members website off the discontinued Drupal 7 framework
- Our "business as usual" of assisting Friends with their IT and website related needs

This report will often refer to the "enquirers website" which can be found here: https://www.quakersaustralia.org.au/ and the "members website" which can be found here: https://quakersaustralia.info.

Our last report from Yearly Meeting 2023 can be found online at: https://www.quakersaustralia.info/sites/aym-members/files/books/files/Information%20Technology%20Committee.pdf

Welcoming the Communications and Publicity Manager

Jacque Schultze in her role as QA Secretary was a member of the IT Committee until July 2023. We thank her for her diligent work for QA and the Committee!

The QA C&PM, a position introduced last year, is automatically a member of the IT Committee. Our stewardship of QA's websites and other digital properties should provide a platform for the C&PM to perform their role.

We have been thrilled to include Holly Dhynes in our regular meetings, as she has been an energetic and capable member of QA and the Committee.

New membership directory

Michael Searle has put in a large amount of time building a new directory system on the Knack platform. This system will replace our Salesforce account as the "source of truth" for Society membership and information.

Our mentoring engagement with Optimi is complete, and the system has been built to a functional level. Michael has engaged Membership Secretaries from regional meetings to get feedback and help them understand how to use the membership directory.

Parts of the new system are available for any Friends to use. This new directory will eventually replace the current "Find a Friend" page on the members website. Interested Friends can find further information on this page of the website:
https://www.quakersaustralia.info/IT/qado-launch

Rebuild of enquirers website

The publicly-facing "enquirers' site" is a single page website built on the Drupal framework which acts as a "landing page" for interested newcomers. In order to make it easier to make changes to the site to support Holly Dhynes as C&PM, we undertook to rebuild this site using Wordpress. This acted as a "trial run" for replacing the members' website (see more in the next section).

This rebuild was completed by Itomic, after evaluating several different Wordpress contractors. We believe that we can apply our in-house knowledge now to administer and update this site with less ongoing use of contractors.

The rebuilt website is visually almost identical to the old site, as we did not want to evaluate any design changes.

Replacing Drupal 7 for the members website

An ongoing saga for us has been the need to move off the current version of the Drupal software which powers the members' website. The version we are using is no longer receiving security updates from the Drupal project, and while we are aware of no current security issues, it is most responsible to run supported versions of web technology.

The next supported version of Drupal which we would consider is version 10, but we have been advised that upgrading to any version higher than 7 will be similar to a "full rebuild" of the site. This is due to significant incompatible changes between Drupal 7 and higher versions.

We have been considering a range of options. Full rebuilds, using Drupal 10 or a different platform entirely (such as Wordpress) are likely to be costly.

In February 2024 we were introduced to the Quaker Meetings Network, a UK-based organisation which provides both public-facing web pages, and private intranets, for many meetings across Britain. An example of one such public-facing page is here: https://hampsteadquakers.org.uk/

We have been evaluating the features of QMN to see if using their platform would suit all the needs of Australian Friends. More information about QMN is available here: https://quaker.app/about

Other work

Amongst these larger ongoing projects, we have continued to provide support for Friends using our websites and other IT systems. Some, but not all, of this work includes:
- Helping numerous Friends with passwords and login access to the website
- Helping numerous Friends with their @quakersaustralia.info email addresses
- Investigating possible scam emails that have been received
- Consolidating and securing our online assets
- Supporting QA's Facebook Page, Facebook Group and YouTube channel
- Investigating alternative hardware for blended/hybrid Zoom meetings
- Updating content on the members website including archiving a number of AYM Committees - now found at: https://www.quakersaustralia.info/archived-former-national-committees-and-working-groups
- Liaising with Aotearoa/New Zealand YM Friends to share experiences with different forms of software
- Searching for Friends with relevant experience who may be willing to join the Committee
- Planning our budget requirements
- Keeping up to date with changes from our software suppliers (e.g. Google, Dropbox, MailChimp, etc.)
- Maintaining our membership database (e.g. removing out of date records)

Part B: Items for Consideration

None