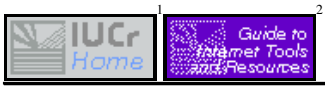

Crystallographic Societies and Associations

This section offers general advice to those who wish to set up pages for their own crystallographic association. It does not attempt to explain the technicalities of running a web server, but assumes that any crystallographer maintaining Web pages will have access to a computer expert for further explanations, and that all the crystallographer has to do is to generate the appropriate files and copy them to the server, using the Internet services and tools described elsewhere in this guide. There are two main sections

- Maintaining Pages for a Crystallographic Association[3]
- A list of Crystallographic Associations[4]

Maintaining Pages for a Crystallographic Association

Before setting up your own pages, look at several existing ones to get an idea of what they provide. You may find they have already done most of the work for you and have much useful information to which you can just link. This section is illustrated by examples taken from the British Crystallographic Association (BCA) pages[5], which you may copy as a starting point for setting up your own pages.

This section has two parts

- what to store[6] and
- hints on maintenance.[7]

What to store

If your association has been publishing a regular newsletter, then your Web pages will carry much the same sort of information. You may be able to save work for yourself by using a word processor which can output HTML format so that a single piece of text can be both printed and stored on the Web. In time you may be able to dispense with the expensive printing and postal charges and just communicate with your members through the Web.

Other advantages of Web pages are:

- faster update times,
- wider advertising of your Association activities,
- attraction of new members who find an interesting meeting through your pages,
- society administration becomes cheaper and more efficient since potential members can print their own version of your membership form and mail it to you with their subscription,
- reports on past projects can be kept readily accessible (*e.g.* the BCA educational materials collection and software survey), and
- easy access to on–line databases, software archives, commercial suppliers.

Topics to store

Bear in mind that two types of people will access your site, crystallographers who know exactly

[1] http://www.iucr.ac.uk/iucr–top/welcome.html
[2] int.index.html
[3] #maintain
[4] #CrysAss
[5] http://www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk/BCA/index.html
[6] #store
[7] #hintm

where to find you, and those who are just 'surfing the net' and think you may be able to tell them something about crystal balls and their magic properties. To persuade these people to learn about crystallography you may want to add a page of a simple description of crystallography in a prominent place on your home page.

Topics you might store for crystallographers

Long term general administration pages with permanent information intended particularly for your members:

- Aims of the association,
- History,
- Structure of the association, including specialist subgroups,
- How to join,
- Membership form, (this need not be one which is completed on–line – a simple text file is probably all you need initially),
- Addresses of officials, possibly with portraits and
- Newsletters past/future.

Short term information, most of which will be deleted and not archived:

- Latest news, this will have links to the other files where the topic more properly belongs,
- Jobs vacant/wanted,
- For sale/wanted,
- Services offered/wanted,
- News of members, prize winners, honours received, obituaries,
- News of meetings/courses/conferences which you are planning and
- links to meeting lists maintained elsewhere.

Longer term information:

- Crystallographic and other journals[8], including IUCr pages, Acta Cryst, JAC, WDC,
- other publishers, for book/journal purchase, publishers[9],
- list of neutron and photon sources. Several places maintain these, but you may want to speed up access for readers in your country by copying the links to your server, so that your readers have faster access because they only have to make one request outside your locality,
- access to databases,
- hardware –links to commercial suppliers,
- software –links to commercial suppliers and
- academic/PD/commercial software libraries of interest.

Links to other places:

- other related professional societies in your country and world wide
- list of active places in your country, University Departments, Research Laboratories, museums *etc*.

Educational activities:

- educational materials,
- educational software on the net,
- projects/courses etc on the Net and
- use of VRML (described elsewhere on these pages)

Non–crystallographic sites of general interest in your locality:

[8] http://www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk/BCA/journal.html
[9] http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/archive/publishers.html

- Travel information, precautions for travellers,
- Information from your Government,
- Newspapers,
- Family history,
- 'Rough Guide' on–line, a well known series of guide books
- List of local restaurants, pubs, *etc*
- Scholarly Societies Project[10] which has lists of many scholarly societies which have traditionally printed journals. The project is looking at the impact on them of electronic publishing.

Hints on maintenance

Having decided which of these topics you want to store on your pages, you now have to create some files with links between them.

Use a directory structure: As with any computing project it pays to think a little about how you will store your files. Initially you can manage with all your files in one directory. As your information expands you will get more and more files and find it increasingly hard to know what you have and where it is, so you will need to make a directory structure to mirror the information structure. I store general information in the top level directory with specialist groups, BCA projects, and issues of the newsletter in their own sub–directories.

Use meaningful filenames: I give names based on the date after which I should delete them to files which are only stored for a short time. This includes short notices of meetings and situations vacant notices.

Keep a backup: We live in dangerous times; criminals may steal the memory chips from your computer, terrorists may mistake your offices for a Defence laboratory and blow it up, fire may break out in overloaded old wiring, *etc.* Any of these could mean that you lose all your files so you should keep some form of backup. Large computer centres will take their own backup precautions, so you may not need to worry about it. For example, in the case of the BCA, there are two complete copies, one in London, on the server at Birkbeck College, one on the ISIS computers at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire where I do testing and some editing. In addition I keep the more permanent files on a PC floppy disc at home.

Archiving old information: Some files are not useful after their deadline date has passed, for example those advertising vacancies for post docs. You may wish to keep others in an archive. For example, those used to run your last conference can merely be copied and edited to run your next one. They can also prove useful when you are considering topics for future conferences and want a list of previous topics, or you are writing a history of your association. Ask your association President and Officials for guidance on what to delete.

Update frequency: How often should you update your files? If you are a busy crystallographer who is also a part time Webmaster, you will not have time to do it daily, but you may want to set aside a regular time, perhaps weekly, or monthly, depending on how much new information you find, and how often your computer centre does system maintenance which affects access to your site. I try to update our pages weekly, with occasional more urgent updates, for example when we receive news of Bursaries with near deadlines just after the latest issue of our printed newsletter has been sent to the printer.

File Creation/ style suggestions: There are many authoring packages but personally I find that a simple text editor is easier to use, and probably cheaper.

Use of images: I find that the network can be very slow at times, so I have tried to use a minimum of images, because of their loading time. Some people appear to use large high resolution images because they think others will be impressed by their computing ability, and they do not pay attention to the readability of their pages on lower resolution screens. Others use very small images for emphasis on almost every line. If the reader asks for all images to be turned off, their

[10] http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/overview.html

pages present an ugly almost unreadable appearance to the reader. I use images **only** where they contribute something to the information content, for example photographs of the association officials. Check your file formats with a local browser with and without the images turned on and see how legible they are.

File contents: There are two types of page:

1. your home page. This is the first one most people see, it should probably be given the default name of **index.html,** and be merely a list of the contents with links to all the other pages to be found at your site.
2. the other pages hold the details; they should have a link back to your 'home' page

The home page: On this page you need to identify your association clearly at the top, using your 'logo' if any; it is polite to acknowledge help given by your sponsors, to tell readers who you are with your email address for any suggestions, comments, advice, *etc.* I like to include the date of last update of the file near the beginning. The rest of this page is essentially a contents page which summarizes the other pages. It is better to try to keep this page itself short, preferably one screen in length, so that readers can see at a glance what your site offers. For reference an example home page[11] may be consulted.

Other files should have at least one link to your home page, so that readers can easily return to your index page. I find that it simplifies my editing to keep a small file, 'Mynew.html', containing the header and trailer information, with examples of emphasis, some list types and special symbols, especially currency ones which I seldom use. When starting to make a new file, I copy this file to my new file to get the header and trailer information in easily. This advice is for those who use simple editors to create their files, it may not be so useful to those using 'Authoring programs'. You may consult the sample Mynew.html[12] file. Note that you may have to change the address of the files referenced at the end if you are making a file in a sub–directory. This example assumes the index.html and the image 'bca_min.gif' are in the same directory as the file being created.

Maintaining Accuracy: Before copying any file to the public place for others to access I view it with a Web browser locally, and check all the links. Even so, you may set up a link which works perfectly the first time you try it and find within a week that it does not respond. I lack time to check all the links on my pages every week. I check a few and hope that public spirited readers will notify me of any which fail later.

I try to check links on pages I update. If you decide to change the name of one of your more important files leave a forwarding address in a file of the old name for a few months so that your readers have not completely lost your pages.

Feedback from readers: I get very little feedback, so either no–one reads my pages, or they must be tolerable! I have had a few complaints about links not working, and readers being unable to return from a lower directory to my home page.

You can get some information from your computer centre who should be able to provide you with **statistics of file accesses**. These are only a rough guide; they tell you the file was seen, but not whether its content was considered useful, nor whether this was at the same time or later. The 'home' page may be seen several times in one visit since it is the contents page. I was surprised to find that our most popular page was not the one I had expected, our 'list of meetings' but it is our 'jobs' page.

You can also find out which files are seldom accessed; you may want to delete them to save disc space, or, if these are regular parts of your newsletter, save effort by not mounting them with the next issue's information.

Lastly!: Try to keep your filestore tidy, delete unwanted files frequently. Try to remember your main aim in life is to do crystallography, not to spend hours 'surfing the net' pretending you are

[11] int.soc.workex1.html
[12] int.soc.workex2.html

looking for new exciting places for your readers.

Crystallographic Associations

There are now many crystallographic associations with Homes on the World Wide Web, and more are being added all the time, so a complete list would be out of date before it was printed.

Start by looking at the pages for the International Union of Crystallography [13]. They supply information on crystallography for the IUCr and pointers to other information services of interest to crystallographers in several categories:

- Aims, Officers, Statutes of the IUCr, its history,
- World Database of Crystallographers (which may be consulted on–line) and a list of its mirror sites,
- IUCr journals:
  - All 4 sections of Acta Crystallographica
  - Journal of Applied Crystallography
  - Journal of Synchrotron Radiation

  Authors may now query the status of papers submitted to these journals on–line.
- International Tables of Crystallography,
- CIF Crystallographic Information File,
- IUCr Commissions,
- Forthcoming meetings and
- Other information sources.

Other Crystallographic Associations

A comprehensive list of these can be found in the 'Institutions' page of the crystallography section of the World–Wide–Web Virtual Library which is described elsewhere in this guide.

Two of particular interest in 1996 are:

- The American Crystallographic Association (ACA [14]) who is organizing the IUCr Congress XVII in Seattle in 1996, and
- The British Crystallographic Association (BCA [15]) which will organize IUCr Congress XVIII in Glasgow in 1999.

[Index [16]] – 17th July 1996 – © Kate Crennell [17] – **Not to be copied or reproduced without permission**

[13] http://www.iucr.ac.uk/
[14] http://www.hwi.buffalo.edu/ACA/
[15] http://www.cryst.bbk.ac.uk/BCA/index.html
[16] int.index.html
[17] AUTHOR.HOME.HTML