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## Inform, discuss, develop - Serving our Members

As you may know, one of the themes of my Presidential year is to highlight and enhance the role of local sections in delivering professional development opportunities to the rail industry in general and our members in particular.

In my inaugural address I particularly highlighted the importance of having a vibrant and well publicized program of local meetings, and how the papers presented locally are an important resource for all members across the institution globally.

The key to success is often a few basic things done well. I know you already put a lot of effort into your events but ensuring we adequately publicise them, and capturing the knowledge we generate are simple things we can do to maximise the benefits to our members.

I am therefore asking each section committee to make a specific review of;

- Member communications
- Dissemination of Papers/Presentations

## Member Communications

As an initial review I have been looking at the online presence of our local sections. I appreciate that member communications involves many different techniques and media but I have started with the assumption that every section would want as a minimum some sort of website or webpage where contact details, programmes and past papers would be accessed.

The main IRSE website already hosts a basic page for each local section that contains some background information on each section, with some contact details. Eg see <http://www.irse.org/nearyou/default.aspx>. This can also be used to publish your programme and to archive past papers and presentations. For sections with their own online presence, this page can also link to that site for such information.

At the moment there are significant differences in how these section pages on the IRSE website are being used, and some details appear in need of update. Up to date information is a minimum member expectation. In addition, consistency in the look and feel is important to conveying a professional image to our members.

The sections have previously been given login details and information about how to configure their section page but I suspect that many of the authorised users may have moved on or lost interest. If this is going to be a persistent problem we could look at alternative ways of managing these section pages and we are open to suggestions.

However, regardless of who manages these section pages, it starts with having up to date information. As a first step I would be grateful if you would review your page at <http://www.irse.org/nearyou/default.aspx>. to check that the information provided is at least up to date in respect of the following details;

1. Section name
2. Part of the world covered by the Section
3. Chairman's name and email
4. Secretary's name and email
5. Any other relevant (and relatively static) information
6. Link to your section own website, if you have one.
7. If you do not have a local section website with its own events calendar then we can also include a listing of your Section's upcoming events on your section webpage (this can be generated automatically from the website calendar – but requires you to input event details into the calendar).

If you can confirm the correct details, we can look at how to get your page updated – unless of course you are willing and able to do it yourselves.

Please also send a copy of your current programme, ideally for the next 12 months. It is not necessary that all events are locked down in every detail, but flagging up that an event is planned helps people keep their diary free.

Even if your section has its own website please check that it is similarly up to date. However, please also check that the [www.irse.org](http://www.irse.org) page for your section is up to date and correctly links to your site. There should also be a link from your website back to the main IRSE website.

## Dissemination of Papers/Presentations

I would also like you to consider how you are gathering and disseminating copies of the papers and presentations delivered at your events. Around the world our members are interested to share in your knowledge and experience.

Your archive of papers and presentations is therefore a key resource for that. Hopefully if all sections do a good job in this area then a global library of materials will also be accessible to your members.

This requires some process and organisation to ensure copies are obtained from authors, along with the necessary permission to circulate them to members. It would help to also capture a brief abstract describing the subject for indexing purposes, and contact details of the author should questions arise.

I appreciate that some sections have already addressed the above topics and have well maintained online resources, so thank you for that. However, there are still opportunities to improve so I hope all sections will take the time to review and develop some initiatives in these important areas.

Please let me know how you get on, I look forward to hearing from you.



Charles Page  
**IRSE President**