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## **Freemasons and the Internet.**

Recently, I received a lecture from a wise and bearded octogenarian Freemason, informing me that it was folly to spend too much time on Freemasonry's past and not enough time on Freemasonry's future. The impact of his wise words was reduced when, in answer to my question concerning his involvement in the Internet, he replied that he wasn't interested in these 'new fangled things'.

To be fair, he does have a computer and writes excellent papers on noteworthy Freemasons. He has a dial-up e-mail address but it's pretty pointless e-mailing him because he seldom reads his e-mail and rarely acknowledges or replies. He is not alone.

A sample of the members of Lodges and Masonic Organisations, to which I belong, indicates that only about 30% of Freemasons have e-mail address's and of these, fewer than a quarter ever acknowledge or answer e-mails sent to them. This falls well short of one estimate that 57% of the population of the UK are on the Internet<sup>1</sup>. Further, my Province has about 300 Lodges but less than 30 have a presence on the World Wide Web.

I hope you will disagree when I suggest that fewer than 10% of Freemasons regularly visit the excellent web sites of Grand Lodge and the UK Provinces.

When I have proposed to Lodges that they have a web site, the response has been "We've never had one so why have one now?" and "What do we get out of it?" My entirely unsatisfactory answer is to remind brethren that in the past, it was the Tyler task to draw the Lodge on the floor of a room in a tavern. Times have changed and it is now necessary for us to embrace the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and become a part of the Internet revolution.

If you look around at your Lodge meetings, you may discover that the average age of members is well over 60 and this, in part, would explain our reluctance to become a part of the Internet. The aged do not often embrace with eagerness 'new fangled things' but fortunately, as the young and computer literate members achieve maturity and status in the Craft, attitudes will change.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Freemasons embraced innovation. We were leaders in the Enlightenment and in the explosion of scientific knowledge and thought promoted by the Royal Society. Unless the figures I have quoted above are just a local phenomenon, of no general significance, we may be losing our way and become followers rather than leaders? Right or wrong, complacency is dangerous.

The Internet Lodge points the way. We must embrace the new technologies and gently but urgently, encourage brethren to use the Internet and embrace the opportunity to make a daily advance in Masonic knowledge. If we fail to do so, we will suffer the inevitable consequences and follow in the footsteps of the dinosaurs.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.theanswerbank.co.uk/Article3373.html>