



International Events
meeting Scouts worldwide

A guide to successful JOTA press contacts



World Organization of the Scout Movement
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout

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Introduction

This publication aims to assist JOTA activity organizers, -coordinators and team leaders to generate an effective flow of information and publicity about the objectives and results of their work, and to build a good working relationship with the news media.

Whilst some parts may be more relevant for use at a national level, others are equally informative for local Scout leaders that may need to liaise with local media on the JOTA activity.

Communication of successes and the announcement of Scouting activities in general are of direct value to the participants and local Scout groups. Suitably framed messages can help by:

- ❖ drawing the attention of national governments, regional authorities and the general public to the needs and eventual benefits of the local Scout community;
- ❖ attracting the interest of correspondents to the JOTA activity;
- ❖ encouraging other youngsters to take an interest in Scouting;
- ❖ enhancing the publicity and reputation of JOTA and its participants at local and national level;
- ❖ aiding the search for financial supporters, where appropriate;

The document particularly addresses communications via the 'mass media' (TV, radio and the written press), the workings of which may be less familiar to JOTA organizers. It also covers web sites and other internally generated support such as CDs and video.

The following pages outline good practices that can be employed in:

- ❖ defining key messages;
- ❖ establishing target audiences;
- ❖ selecting the appropriate modes of communication;
- ❖ tailoring information to the intended outlets;
- ❖ building good relationships with the media;
- ❖ evaluating results; and
- ❖ maximizing the exposure of messages;

As well as providing sound advice on how best to proceed, the content includes examples of successful approaches that have been used to date. Further examples can be found in the newspaper clippings that are included each year in the annual World JOTA report. Copies can be downloaded from the WOSM web server at www.scout.org/jota.

Reworked from and partly based on "A guide to successful communications", published by the European Commission to assist publication of research results under the 6th Framework Programme.

1. Communications strategy

1.1. Define your message

The first step in any communications exercise is to define the message or messages to be transmitted. An evident objective is to focus on positive achievements and the benefits they bring.

This requires clear agreement and careful coordination among all parties who may act as spokespersons or information sources. Inconsistent facts, figures, emphases and viewpoints are to be avoided at all costs.

1.2. Target your audience

What audience do you want to reach with your press activities? An article written for the general public to create awareness of Scouting in general and the JOTA in particular is surely different than one targeted at the local community to draw attention to the local Scout group and its offerings to the local youth.

1.3. Select your tools

Consider the news value of your project. The interests of an individual JOTA station in a community may be better served with an article in a local newspaper than with nationwide media coverage. If, however, you are running something very special, nationwide coverage may be adequate. If in doubt, consult with your national JOTA organizer.

1.4. Plan your programme

The communications activity has consequences in terms of both financial and time expenditure, in particular when you plan for a larger project. It is therefore essential to establish a plan of predetermined scope and budget, with identified goals.

It is advisable to plan for a regular flow of information, rather than to pin your faith on the occasional ad-hoc announcement. Establishing recognition as an active provider of news and information encourages journalists and others to approach you for help and opinions. By creating a lively dialogue, you gain opportunities for publicity that may not have occurred to you. And in setting your budget, retain a reserve to meet such contingencies.

Establish a list of spokespersons able to deal with particular aspects of your project, and ensure that they are informed about the overall plan and its key messages.

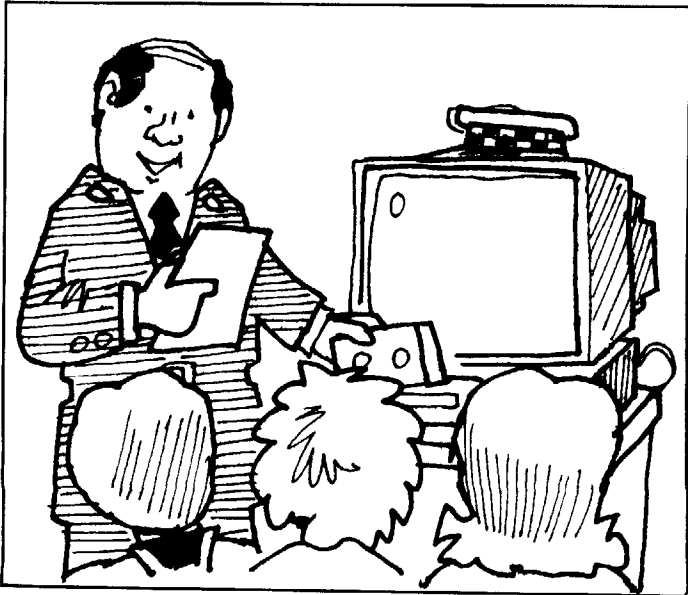
Explore the communications resources that exist within your "network". Scout leaders in your community may have professional contacts with the media that they may be willing to explore for you. Accessing professional skills and facilities, established contacts and existing mailing lists/databases can all save time and money.



2. Media relations

2.1. Why communicate via the mass media?

Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by editorial coverage in the press, or on TV and radio, brings a number of benefits. As mentioned above, these media reach very large audiences. Moreover, the credibility of your messages is enhanced by a public perception of editors' impartiality.



Television is a particularly powerful medium. The public regards television news especially as one of its most trusted information sources. When local/national TV reports on an event, such as a special action during the JOTA, most people unquestioningly accept the presented version as hard fact.

The broadcast media offer a cost-effective way of transmitting information. It does not involve costly and time-consuming production or reprographic processes – and dissemination is increasingly achieved by rapid and inexpensive electronic means.

2.2. Basic principles

Media relations are an indirect form of communication. The direct recipients of a submitted press release, or the attendees at a press conference,

are the journalists or editors involved with particular programmes or publications. Your ultimate goal, however, is to reach their viewers, listeners or readers.

It is therefore essential to ensure that all messages fulfil the criteria necessary to achieve ready acceptance by editors and journalists to maximize the chance of exposure to the actual target audience.

Editors exercise independent control over the content and style of the stories they exploit. You cannot oblige them to use all of the material you supply, nor to reproduce the information exactly as you present it. Consequently, you must do everything possible to make your message interesting, timely, comprehensible, unambiguous and comprehensive – and present it in a manner that makes its transfer to the screen, air or printed page as easy as possible.

Furthermore, journalists are busy people with inflexible deadlines dictated by the publishing process. Also, there is usually considerable competition for their attention. Radio and TV deadlines are usually even shorter than those of the printed press, and their editorial 'spaces' more limited. Be prepared to encourage interest by offering interviews or film crew access at short notice.

2.2.1. Define clear messages

With any communications exercise, you need to define your key messages in terms that will be understandable to the ultimate target audiences. Keep stories simple.

example

'The JOTA (Jamboree On The Air) is an annual event during which Scouts meet each other through amateur radio contacts.' NOT 'The JOTA takes place each year and Scouts make QSO's with other Scouts all over the world, using HF radio contacts at the times of the day when the propagation conditions of the ionosphere allow such DX contacts'.

Prime essentials are that the delivered information should have a clear subject with a factual basis, be relevant to the audience of the targeted programme or publication – and cover a topic that is either newsworthy in its own

right, or relates to a particular field that is in focus at the time of its issue. Also, of course, it should positively reflect the interests of your project.

2.2.2. Present information in a form that meets the journalists' needs

When you are preparing a press release for general distribution, observe the guidelines in Section 2.3. If the timing of a news story is critical, check the broadcast and publication deadlines for your target media. Where the timing is also sensitive for project-related reasons, it may be necessary to issue the press release in advance, with a clearly indicated embargo date.

If you are responding to an editorial invitation to supply information, deliver what is requested:

- Concentrate on the topic indicated and answer the specific questions that may be posed;
- Respect any indications regarding the required text length. In general, published articles are quite short, so do not simply send a 5 000-word off-the-shelf article or a printed brochure. This may be more convenient for you, but it wastes the journalist's time and could result in him/her ignoring your contribution; and
- Wherever possible, take the time to examine the publication and understand its particular approach. It is always desirable to give the impression that your material has been specially prepared.

This last point is also relevant if you are writing an article speculatively for submission to a particular publication.

2.2.3. Be complete

Ensure that your message is complete, self-contained, and does not leave any obvious unanswered questions. Include figures, where available and relevant. Try to think like a journalist: provide everything necessary to form the basis of a good story that will not require too much time spent on additional research.

2.3. Produce an effective press release

A press release is information that is communicated proactively to the media – including TV, radio and electronic publications, as well as the printed press – from which they select the elements they consider to be of interest to their publics. They will edit (or expand upon) your story to produce a broadcast item or text that they consider to be most appropriate.

When the content of a message has been decided, your objectives should be to:

- 'Package' it in a manner that makes it stand out from the many that are competing for journalists' attention;
- Present the story in a way that encourages reproduction of the key points with minimal changes; and
- Make any editing as easy as possible.

2.3.1. Structuring a press release

Heading

The heading is the first element that addresses the journalist. A good heading is a short heading – two lines is a maximum length. Ideally, it should include an active verb, and employ vocabulary that is in common use and will appeal to readers' curiosity or imagination.

example

'Scouts unite the world', NOT 'Scouts take part in JOTA and have many QSO's'

Introductory paragraph

Viewers, listeners and readers – and journalists! – are in a hurry. They need to be able to obtain an overview of a message almost at a glance. So, provide an introductory paragraph of two or three sentences to present the content in a nutshell, and to indicate its significance. This should answer the six basic questions – who?, what?, why?, when?, where? and how? – or as many of them as are relevant in the context.

example

'Scouts (who) will talk to the world next weekend (when). A Jamboree On The Air (what) unites them with their Scout friends world-wide (where). The purpose is to meet each other, exchange ideas, learn from each other and gain a mutual understanding (why). Contacts between the Scouts are made by amateur radio (how).'

Text

Paragraphs should be arranged in order of declining importance. A good test is to check to what extent, starting from the end of the text, paragraphs can be progressively removed without affecting the essence of the message. This equates to the simplest form of editing for a journalist seeking to fill a limited page space when working under deadline pressure.

Adding quotations can be an effective means of making a story more lively and interesting – note that accuracy is essential when quoting third-party sources. It can also be a useful way to make points that are matters of opinion, rather than fact.

example

“We believe that JOTA contributes to a better understanding and mutual respect between youngsters in different countries,” says World JOTA Organizer Richard Middelkoop.

Subheadings

Subheadings divide the text into blocks of ideas and thus facilitate scan reading to identify items of particular interest to the reader. They should consist of just a few words, make a specific point about the story, and ideally be benefit-oriented.

Bullet points

Bullet points are useful when listing a range of options or comparing related facts. They can often be helpful in reducing the amount of space needed to present a complex scenario.

Paragraph numbering

Avoid paragraph numbering and other elements that will not appear on the printed page. They only give the journalist extra work in removing them.

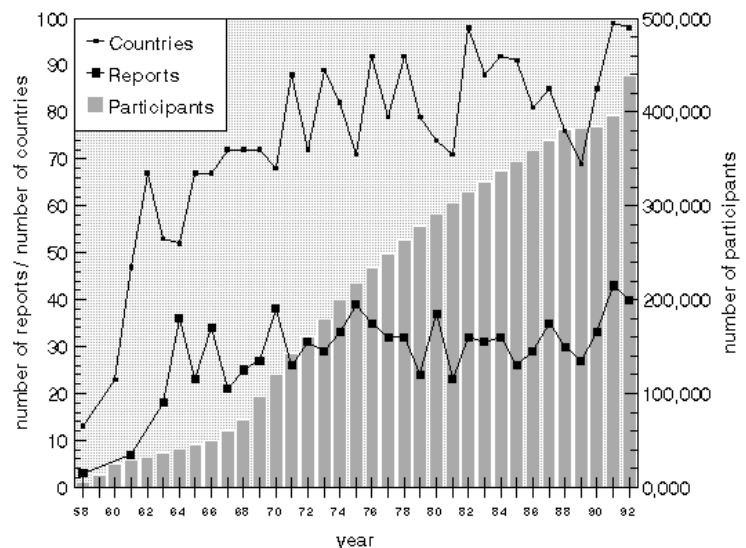
Photographs, diagrams, graphs, tables

An attractive (and good quality) photograph greatly increases the probability that a press release will be selected for publication, particularly if it includes a human element or illustrates a striking application (Scouts in uniform in front of the radio transmitter, Scout holding a fox hunt receiver, close-up of a hand holding a soldering iron soldering an electronic kit, etc.). Where recognition of size is important in understanding the image, e.g. your antenna tower, try to incorporate a reference element to indicate the scale.

When supplied in electronic form, photographs should be suitable for high-quality reproduction – i.e. with a resolution of at least 300 dots/inch. Always provide an explanatory caption.

Diagrams can be a convenient means of explaining a working device, station layout, mast construction, etc. However, it should be realized that space on the printed page is limited. Avoid over-complicated diagrams – and consider providing textual descriptions in the form of a caption relating to key numbers (this also simplifies the production of multilingual releases).

Graphs and tables simplify the interpretation of comparative data, but again should not be unduly complicated.



Background

Avoid the use of extensive technical explanations and historical detail in a press release. This information may nevertheless be useful to journalists intending to write more extended stories. Where appropriate, add it as ‘Notes to editors’ at the end of the text – or even supply a separate background article, clearly labeled as such. Note that a backgrounder can often be recycled to accompany more than one press release, with periodic up-

dating, as required. Another method is to post it on your web site, and to indicate the web site address in your press releases.

2.3.2. Press release style

Speak plainly

Use language that you think a very large audience will understand. And bear in mind that even the editor/journalist may not be a specialist in your particular field, so avoid unnecessary amateur radio and technical jargon.

Where special terminology is unavoidable, add a brief explanation:

example

'The contacts are made by radio amateurs. A radio amateur is a person who passed a technical examination by the telecommunication authorities and obtained a special permit to operate a radio transmitter.'

If abbreviations are employed throughout a text, spell out the corresponding phrase in full the first time they are used:

example

JOTA (Jamboree On The Air)

WOSM (World Organization of the Scout Movement)

Aim to express just one basic idea in each sentence. Keep sentences short – a maximum of 30 words is a good rule of thumb. Avoid ambiguity; minimize the use of passive verbs.

To facilitate reading, keep paragraphs short – typically two to three sentences.

Be consistent

- Be consistent in the use of spellings, abbreviations, units of measurement and the use of initial capital letters.
- For technical matters, it is advisable to employ the internationally recognized SI measurement units and their abbreviations.
- Note that, in the English language, initial capitals should not be used for generic words
- Always make use of your word-processing programme's spelling and grammar checker.

2.3.3. Plan the circulation strategy

If the message is to remain topical, a press release must reach its recipients as quickly as possible. Its circulation must therefore be organized in advance. Releases may be sent by fax or email, or made available on a web site – provided that the site is known to the targeted journalists, and that they visit it regularly.

As has been stated, journalists tend to have little time and work under considerable pressure. You are therefore strongly advised to make life easier for them by making every effort to ensure that information reaches them directly, rather than expecting them to search for it.

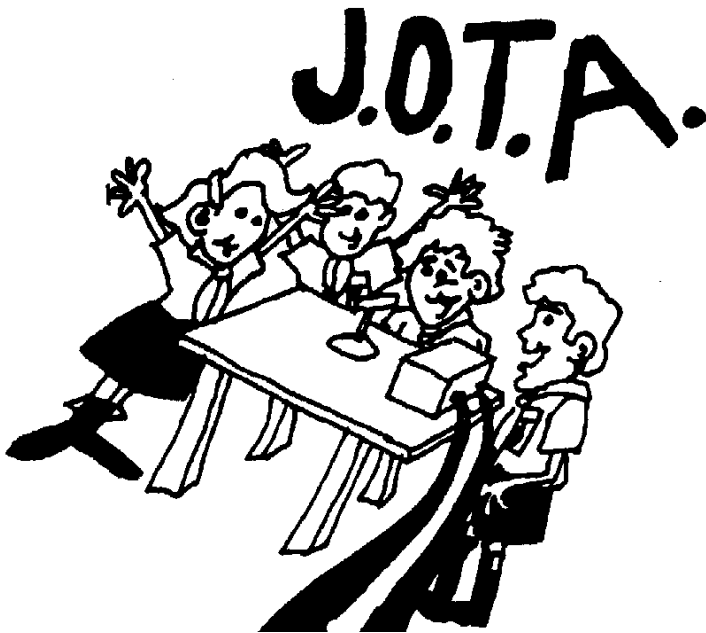
When news is also announced directly, at a press conference for example, the press release should be distributed at the place where the event takes place. It can be handed out individually, or with other documents in a complete press pack. This should not preclude a follow-up distribution, as not all of the invited journalists will necessarily attend the event.

Hint:

Make use of events: if you are participating in an event such as a national gathering of radio amateurs or a conference organized by a third party (your national amateur radio organization e.g.), take advantage of the fact that journalists are likely to be present. Bring your press releases to hand out, and check what press facilities may be provided. Ascertain in advance whether there is a pressroom in which you can display your material, and what formalities are necessary to gain access. The pressroom can also be a good place to make new contacts and organize interviews with journalists.

2.4. Organize a successful press conference

Press conferences are appropriate to mark a major event or announce important news, where the ability to see results at first hand, or to question the personalities involved, will bring added value for journalists.



Another justification is to give a general briefing about a topic of current or emerging interest. This may not necessarily produce a great deal of immediate press coverage, but will provide journalists with a contextual framework for future announcements. It is nevertheless always preferable to provide a news angle that will justify the time spent in attending such an event.

2.4.1. Plan ahead

Press conferences can take various forms. They can be open to all journalists, addressed to a targeted panel in line with the subject and geographical area, or reserved for a limited circle of journalists seen as opinion leaders.

Whatever the format, success requires the mobilization of substantial resources. Careful preparation may take between 15 and 20 days work full-time for one person, plus a presence on the day and for follow-up.

Moreover, such an event costs money, and the costs should be calculated in advance. This is not the type of operation that should be repeated too often; otherwise it becomes a drain on budgets and dulls the interest of the press. It is vital to weigh the value, and not to abuse the method to announce details that could easily be communicated in writing.

2.4.2. Timing

Press conferences are typically held in the late morning, but an early morning press breakfast or midday press lunch are also acceptable alternatives.

Other media events can take half a day, or even a whole day, for example when they involve a visit to a particular radio station or event site – but do not forget that time is valuable to journalists. A number of elements can be combined, such as a field trip followed by a press lunch – or even something more ambitious.

Before fixing the time and date of a press conference, make every effort to ascertain whether a conflicting event may be taking place which could divert your target audience. Ask a known journalist to check his/her diary, or – if you intend to hold your event during a conference or exhibition – check with the organizers to determine whether another participant has similar plans.

2.4.3. Invitation

Ensure that the invitation includes all the facts that journalists need to know – who, what, why, when, where, how – and include any additional information that will help convince them to attend.

Issue the invitations two to three weeks in advance. Send two copies of the invitation to the editorial office: one for the journalist and one for the editor-in-chief. Be specific about any costs – travel, accommodation, etc. – that you are prepared to support.

Do not assume that all journalists invited to a press conference will be willing or able to attend. To assemble ten journalists, for example, you may need to extend invitations to double that number.

2.4.4. Location

Choose a central location with easy access; attach a map with the invitation, and make arrangements for parking and/or transfers from the nearest transport terminals.

Journalists are only human – an attractive or unusual location just might prove instrumental in encouraging their attendance.

2.4.5. Press kit

Prepare a full set of material for the journalists. This should include press release(s) covering the main message(s) being communicated, relevant background material, such as specially prepared press fact sheets, relevant publications and possibly brochures as well as handout versions of the presentation slides. Also include CVs of relevant people and a contact sheet to simplify journalistic follow-up.

Prepare suitable illustrations – graphics, diagrams and/or photographs. These can be provided on a CD, or a suitable web site address supplied to enable the journalist to download them.

2.4.6. Presentations

All press conference contributors should aim to meet certain minimum standards in the style of their spoken delivery and the quality of their accompanying presentations (see Section 4).

Presentations should be prepared in detail with regard to both their contents and length. As with any form of media message, keep the contents simple and the messages clear.

Support the talk with good clear slides, ideally in a PowerPoint format that can easily be distributed to the press in printed form or on disk. Develop a simple style and do not try to put too many messages on one slide. Use pictures, graphics and diagrams wherever possible and keep words to a minimum. A slide should support what you are saying, not provide your speaking notes.

It is essential to rehearse presentations thoroughly before an event, and to verify their functioning at the location itself. To avoid compatibility problems, check in advance what type of audiovisual equipment is available, and in what form presentations can be accepted (laptop plug-in, CD, DVD, videotape, memory stick...).



2.4.7. Other practical details

When taking responsibility for the organization of a press conference, make a checklist of materials and services that will be required on the day – from name badges and table cards, to public address and audiovisual equipment.

Set aside a reception desk at the entrance to the conference area. Obtaining full particulars from journalists can form useful input for assembling an up-to-date database of press contacts.

Make sure that journalists are collected and accompanied during facility visits, with competent people on hand to answer questions – and to ensure their safety.

Have available a suitable area for TV or radio journalists to record specific interviews.

2.4.8. Follow-up

Be sure to note, and respond to, any journalists' requests that cannot be dealt with on the day of a conference (e.g. providing specific pictures or additional background information). Building a reputation as a reliable information source and a person/organization that delivers on promises pays long-term dividends.

Hint:

Mail/email press kits to journalists who were on your invitation list but did not attend the event. This could well have been due to circumstances beyond their control.

2.5. Build good relationships with the journalists

The best way of ensuring the co-operation of journalists is to establish a relationship of trust based on mutual respect. There is no point in contacting them constantly for the least reason, or swamping them with too much documentation. On the other hand, keep them informed when you have genuine news to impart.

Cultivate key contacts. If you believe that a story appearing on a particular programme or in a particular newspaper or magazine would be an ideal means of advancing your cause – because of its topical or geographical coverage, or its particular editorial approach – offer an exclusive. This could simply be in the form of a telephone

interview, or might include a visit to your premises or a face-to-face meeting with a senior figure. But be sparing with this tactic, as its overuse may alienate other journalists. Adopt these common-sense measures:

- **Be proactive**

Do not wait for journalists to contact you. Go to them and anticipate their needs by drawing their attention to key events and particularly interesting developments.

- **Make yourself available**

When journalists are looking for information, they want to obtain it quickly – perhaps for the next day's article or programme. Respond as rapidly as possible, and never leave a question unanswered. If you are unable to react in time, take the trouble to call or email explaining the reason.

- **Be a conduit**

When you are not able to answer journalists questions, try to refer them to someone in the group who can. Warn the nominated person to expect a call – and provide any relevant information that will help them to prepare/avoid mixed messages.

2.6. How to get on TV

Apart from including TV journalists in your press release circulation lists and inviting them to press conferences, there is a number of other actions you can pursue to attract the attention of this exceptionally powerful medium.

Hint:

The most important thing to realize is that TV is VISUAL. In many cases, even a story that may not sound particularly interesting could have TV appeal if it LOOKS interesting.

2.6.1. Five things that TV producers look for

With some exceptions, TV producers are not interested in technical activities for its own sake, but rather for the impact it has on human life. Consequently, there are five basic angles that they especially like to cover:

1. **Politics.** Anything related to local, national, or international politics can be a newsworthy story – especially if you mount a challenge to accepted views, or propose new facts and figures that raise questions about existing or proposed policies;



2. **Social crises/problems** tend to receive similar coverage, as they hold public interest. Often, there can be a demand for more information to be made available/accessible in the public domain. Global warming, natural disasters, cyber crime and terrorist threats all fall into this category. Technologies with the potential to tackle such problems are frequently hailed as imminent solutions, even though they may realistically take years to be fully approved;

3. **Health and education** are constantly in the limelight. Medical breakthroughs, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), consumer safety issues and food scares/warnings invariably attract attention, as do efforts to offer increased learning opportunities and plug the skills gaps in national workforces;

4. **Celebrities** always get television time. So getting a known personality to become associated with your activity can be of great value, especially if the outcome has a humanitarian dimension; and, finally,

5. **Novelty**. If your activity has an exciting new angle to propose, this will raise interest. However, while programmes will cover topics that they know from experience to be winners, original stories relating to esoteric fields often leave assignment editors wondering why they should cover them. In such cases, greater ingenuity may be required in 'selling' the concept.

2.6.2. Be proactive

Where do you start?

The number of TV programmes dealing routinely with technical matters is relatively limited. A logical starting point is therefore to draw on your own viewing experience in assembling a 'hit list' of candidates.

Next, you should try to identify and evaluate the presenters/reporters working on these programmes:

- Do they appear to show any interest in/knowledge of your field, or to deal with issues to which you believe you can contribute?
- Do they have a particular viewpoint or cause that may be sympathetic/antagonistic to your interests?
- Is their style friendly/aggressive?

Having identified one or more suitable targets, take the initiative to obtain contact details for them via the relevant broadcast organizations.

The media are very telephone oriented. However, more and more reporters work via email when establishing 'first contacts' or checking out press releases. Send a press release or personalized message (together with visual material on CD, DVD or videotape, if clips with sufficient visual appeal are available), then call to promote your story. Get to the point fast, and keep to it. Make sure your story is good. Recount the human interest or visual part first.

Remember that, while you are talking, the reporter is thinking:

- What's in this for us? Will our viewers be interested?
- Will my boss think this is a good idea?
- How much trouble will it be for us to get this on tape and on the air?

If you can get positive answers on those three points, you have a good chance of successfully enticing TV to cover your story.

Key messages

- Decide on the key point(s) you want to make – and rehearse them!
- Make sure that you point out the positive aspects – THINK ABOUT:
 - > Technical excellence – how special is it?
 - > Educational value - does it improve quality of life?
 - > Is it a good example of collaboration/networking?
 - > Is your presentation neutral/independent, and therefore likely to be viewed as 'reliable'?
- Can you present your message in terms that the public will understand?
- Can it be linked to a topic of current public interest or concern?

Perseverance pays

Keep in mind that many TV stations are short-handed and run to very tight deadlines. If you do not succeed in making contact within a reasonable time, consider approaching a station's news desk or the head of the appropriate department.

A good approach is to link your activity or its findings to a topic with a high public profile – although some creative thinking may be required to establish such a connection... The next step is to pick up the telephone, send an email or think about developing a press release.

2.6.3. TV interview technique

Know (and rehearse!) the story/angle you want to get across, while also aiming to understand what the interviewer is likely to be seeking. Also prepare and discuss questions with the journalist if possible.

When setting up the interview:

- Location – think about where/how you will appear (where will you stand/sit and try to feel comfortable). Try to select a background that is appropriate to your story. Avoid sitting behind a desk unless you wish to be seen as a bureaucrat;
- Get key messages in early. Mention JOTA by name.
- Keep it short and to the point – if it is not a 'live' interview, they will edit the tape anyway;
- Show enthusiasm! Remember to smile and speak clearly, especially if you are speaking in a language that is not your own; and
- Body language – look at the reporter, NOT the camera – and ignore the microphone. Do not fold your arms, as this is perceived as creating a barrier between you and your audience.

Hint:

Do not speak 'off-the record', and do not be trapped into making unguarded remarks before the camera has stopped turning or the studio recording light is extinguished. Some reporters use this tactic to obtain quotes that may be used out of context to support a hidden agenda.

2.7. Evaluate results

In order to justify the effort put into the generation of media publicity, it is advisable to monitor the coverage obtained. The most basic measure is the quantitative result – i.e. minutes of programme time or the number of 'column cm' achieved. More difficult is a qualitative assessment of the resulting impact.

For example, a full-page story in a local newspaper will be seen by a few thousand people residing in the area, whereas a brief news item in a nationwide newspaper is likely to be noted by a lot more people. And an item on a BBC World Service science programme may be heard round the world. So, how can you calculate their relative value?

Estimating the level of success will always involve a considerable degree of subjectivity. Nevertheless, there are various steps you can take to establish a basis for judgement:

• Collect press clippings/transcriptions

Ask for feedback from colleagues and partners. During meetings and informal contacts, ask them to forward any media coverage they discover in their day-to-day reading and viewing. To retain their interest, circulate radio and TV transcriptions or recordings and collated pages of press clippings that they can incorporate into their own files.

• Subscribe to a commercial service

Commercial services are available to supply copies of broadcasts or Internet downloads of press cuttings categorized according to country, subject and specific company or product name. Their cost escalates in proportion to the number of search parameters that are specified.

3. Web site

3.1. Why a web site?

The World Wide Web has become a major information channel. This success is explained by the variety and multitude of information it makes available to a wide number of people at any time with a few clicks of a mouse. Search-engine technology also makes possible extremely powerful and rapid research in the gigantic library that appears to be growing exponentially without stop. Unfortunately the information that is published on the web is often of poor quality, badly written, badly adapted to the different publics that read it, poorly organized, and presented in overly complex sites that are impossible to use...

It has become indispensable for producers of information – particularly JOTA organizers - to publish on the web. But it is essential to do this well, taking into account some basic good principles that are easy to apply. Following these rules will not guarantee the quality of a web site, yet will make communication more effective.

3.2. What type of web site?

Scout activity web sites come in various forms. A major distinction can be drawn between internally and externally oriented sites. The former are designed simply to improve communication between organization team members and are not really addressed by this guide. The latter can be key tools to raise the image of your activity and improve dissemination to potential users, politicians and public authorities, as well as the general public. In practice, a web site can meet both internal and external needs – using password protection to allow organization team members to share confidential data, while still offering unrestricted public access to more general information.

3.3. Exploiting the web site

A web site can serve both as a communications tool in itself and a method of disseminating all the other material discussed in this guide. It allows access to key messages about the project and its results, tailorable to all your different audiences. It can and should be updated on a regular basis. Key elements include some form of project description, background on the organization, regular information on progress and, ideally, information for the media – an electronic press room with press releases, background information and pictures. Other suitable items could include a web version of any JOTA newsletter – providing links to further information – and downloadable versions of any literature.

Hint:

Do not forget to publicize your web site. Put the address on all print items, press releases, correspondence, etc.

3.4. Ten keys to good web communication

3.4.1. The time factor

The printed word is fixed – this is an advantage in that your message cannot be distorted, but a weakness as it cannot easily be updated. A web page can be ephemeral – here today and gone tomorrow. So, while people do not expect a printed item to change, they expect a web site to be up to date on the day they consult it. A web site editor must therefore consider the development and publication of the site as a long-term exercise which is never ending.

The life of the site consists of an initial 'publication' and regular updates – publishing new contents, archiving out-of-date contents, adding new functions, and improving the presentation. Technically, it will be necessary to use the contents in different contexts, not all of which can be identified at the start. So database technologies should be used where possible, allowing contents to be exported in different forms without expensive and complicated processing.

Hints:

- At the concept stage, identify sections which will remain stable over time and contents that need updating regularly
- Establish an update strategy – who does what, when and how often.

3.4.2. Hyperlinks

Unlike paper products that are generally read in a linear manner from the first page to the last, a classical web site is made up of a series of pages interconnected using hyperlinks. These hyperlinks are rather like book-marks, allowing readers to move from one place on a page to anywhere else on the site – or the web itself.

This extremely simple but powerful concept has considerable influence on how sites are read – it is essential to take into account that a reader can arrive at page without having seen any ‘preceding’ material. This means that each page on a web site has to be considered by its author as an autonomous element, with self-supporting information, that can be understood without any context or introduction.

Hints:

To ensure pages function on the web, check that:

- Pages are short. Printed out, they should be no longer than two A4 sheets;
- Try to mix all the pages of a web site and read them in any arbitrary order. The information should still be understandable;
- The number of links in the text – or separate box – should be reasonable. More than five links on a page can cause a reader not to finish the item.

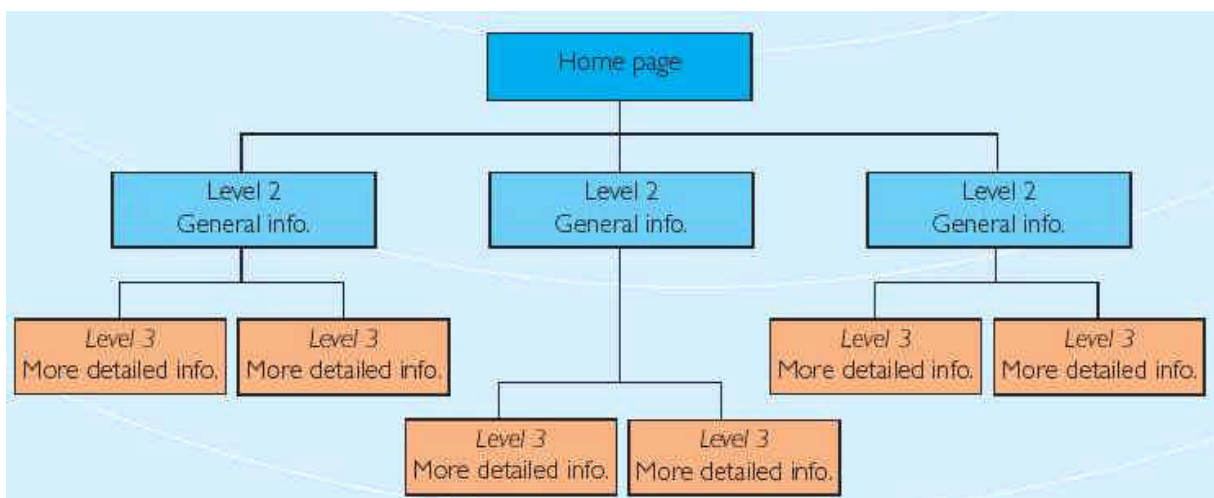
3.4.3. Information structure and ‘readership level’

It is not possible to know all the readers who might visit your site. They may be looking for very general information, detailed reports or technical data – and with different levels of understanding of your activity.

The web makes it possible to address all these different audiences in an extremely simple and practical manner by exploiting the ‘readership level’. Most web tree structures are pyramidal, with the home page representing the summit of the pyramid. The home page leads to X level-2 pages, each of which leads to Y level-3 pages, and so on. One of the secrets of a good web site is to exploit this information structure to allow several readership levels: the most accessible pages should provide general information, while more ‘distant’ pages provide ever more detail for the more motivated reader.

Hints:

- List all the questions your web site is intended to answer and prioritize them;
- Provide responses to essential questions in the first two levels of the web site;
- Try to limit to three the overall number of clicks required to reach essential information – more detailed information can be put deeper in the site;
- Try to find the best balance between width and depth on the site. Ideally, one page should provide access to a maximum of 12 subordinate pages. There is no practical limit to the overall depth of the site – but the more it can be reduced, the more effective it will be.



3.4.4. Navigation

The complexity of a web site is not a problem as long as it is easy to 'navigate' – that is to move from section or page to another. An effective navigation protocol fulfils a double function: allowing readers to know exactly where they are in the site structure at any time, and making it possible to move easily and quickly with a limited number of clicks.

At the same time, it is essential to remember that the level of computer expertise of the great majority of web users is extremely limited. If the navigation system is too complex, they may be unable to understand how to move around a site. Finally, you should not overestimate the manual dexterity of your web site visitors: areas of micro-manipulation should be avoided. Navigation areas should be obvious, and immediately comprehensible. Remember also that content that cannot be seen simply does not exist as far as visitors are concerned. It is necessary therefore to show as much as possible of the richness of a site, without making page reading too complicated.

Hints:

- Call on the services of a professional web or graphic interface designer to develop an effective navigation module based on the information structure of your site;
- Get users without specific knowledge of the web to test the navigation system;
- Make sure that visitors know where they are on the site at all times; check also that it is easy to move from one page or section to another;
- If possible, perform the same test with people of reduced dexterity or poor eyesight to determine whether the system poses significant difficulties for such users;
- Finally, remember that the site structure will change with time: if you have selected a horizontal navigation bar, consider in advance how it will look when the number of buttons doubles.

3.4.5. Multimedia

The HTML format used to code web pages makes it possible to mix text and multimedia elements such as photographs, graphics, plans, animations, sound and video. Well chosen and well designed, such elements are extremely useful in making complex ideas understandable. In addition to their communications value, they can also make pages more agreeable to read.

Therefore, from the conception stage, web site editors should think about the best way to exploit the multimedia elements available and to create new elements to make the information clearer, more relevant and easier to read.

Multimedia elements can slow the display of a web page. And some elements – such as video – require small 'plug-in' programs that must be available on the user's computer.

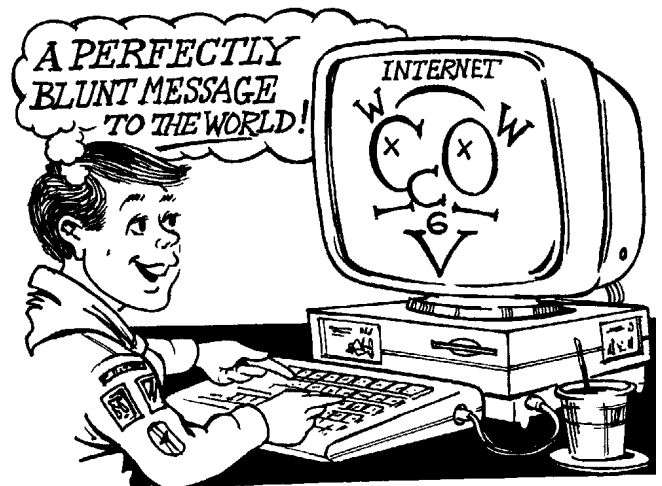
Therefore, ensure that:

- Contents are still readable and understandable even if the multimedia elements are not displayed;
- Multimedia elements are not too 'heavy', affecting performance – use, for example, a thumbnail image that can be linked to a bigger picture;
- Only standard multimedia formats that can be handled by most computers are used;
- Links to download sites for necessary plug-ins are included.

3.4.6. Interactivity

Interactivity is one of the principle characteristics of the Internet, allowing a bi- or multidirectional interaction between several users and/or computers. A web site can therefore not only publish information but also get feedback from its visitors, contributing to new content, on-line surveys or other more advanced functions.

Simple email enables a visitor to make contact with the person responsible for the web site. More extensive interactivity makes it possible to improve the quality of the information on offer by enabling visitors to adapt their



surfing to their own particular needs – e.g. by allowing them to access databases through some form of interrogation interface.

3.4.7. Editorial quality

Whatever the quality of the structure, it is the message that is of major importance. It is difficult to describe a quality text because 'quality' is obviously highly subjective. Nevertheless, there are some universal common-sense criteria, as well as certain advice that is specific to web communication.

- An informative web text consists of short and simple sentences;
- The language should be clear and precise, using a carefully selected vocabulary that does not fall into specialist jargon;
- Good spelling is essential;
- Do not try to write clever headlines – go for simple, straightforward phrasing.

3.4.8. Ergonomics

"Please validate your login before refreshing this page" is the type of absolutely incomprehensible message that is all too common on the World Wide Web. Many web sites pose ergonomic problems – in the form of terminology puzzles, visual challenges (such as text written in small light gray characters on a white background) or elementary logical gaps – that make them almost impossible to use.

Whether the tool is a web site, a video recorder or a mobile phone, user experience depends directly on product ergonomics. If this experience is poor, no matter what the intrinsic quality of the product, it will be considered bad. A web site must therefore be easy to use for an uneducated public.

Hints:

- Avoid jargon or faddish terminology;
- Do not ask a computer programmer to help design an ergonomic application;
- When positioning the various elements (text, navigation, links, images, ...) that make up a web page, think where you would instinctively expect to find them if you did not know anything about the material you were dealing with. If you find it difficult to view this objectively, ask someone outside your area to check it for you.

3.4.9. Compatibility

In principle, HTML coding for web pages should be totally independent of the machines and systems used to read it. Whatever the computer, operating system or navigation system being used, an HTML page should ideally display in exactly the same way. In practice, nothing is less true.

3.4.10. Information and meta data

In essence, the web is a virtual medium. While it might be easy to store a magazine or folder in a filing cabinet, it is much more difficult to save a web page for subsequent use. Therefore, most users end up by printing out the texts that interest them, in order to store and refer to them in a classical manner.

Unlike an article within a brochure, these isolated pages are without context. Consequently, it is essential that certain data be visible: author, date of validity of the information, original web address, etc. Such meta data is sometimes visible and sometimes invisible – hidden in the coding on the HTML pages and used by some search engines, for example. If you want the information you produce to be correctly referenced in search engines and wish your readers to have a clear idea of the validity of the published information, it is essential to create these tags in a visible form.

3.5. Evaluating a web site

A simplistic way of measuring the success of your web site is by the 'hit rates' of the various pages – the number of visits each page receives. This information is generally easy to obtain and can also provide you with some indication of which elements are of the most interest.

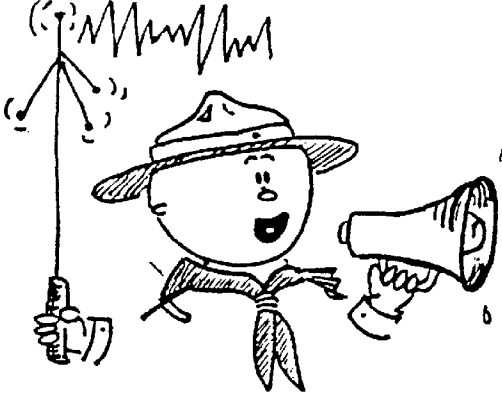
To increase traffic:

- Actively encourage linking from other relevant web sites;
- Register your web site with appropriate portals.

4. Presentations

4.1. The spoken word

When giving a spoken presentation to a mixed and predominantly non-specialized audience, many of the remarks mentioned in Section 2 on 'Media relations' are equally applicable or adaptable, i.e.:



- Keep the presentation clear, simple and to the point;
- Structure the message so that your key point is the one that will be retained most strongly in listeners' minds;
- Avoid complex sentence constructions and obscure or slang words; many in the audience may be coping with a language that is not their mother tongue;
- Maintain the technical content at a level you believe the average person will understand;
- Eliminate unnecessary technical jargon; and
- Communicate your enthusiasm, and try to incorporate interesting or amusing anecdotes that will retain listeners' attention.

4.2. Visual support

Attractive slides add visual interest to spoken presentations, and help to explain points that cannot easily be made in words alone. PowerPoint is the commonly accepted standard for such visual support, and most conference facilities are equipped to handle slide sequences created in this format. But, all of your efforts will be wasted if the audience cannot read or interpret the projected images! It is vital to THINK SIMPLE and THINK LARGE. In fact, layouts should be twice as simple and four times as bold as those used for paper documents. It is also preferable to have more slides with less information on each slide, than fewer, more detailed, slides. With a disciplined approach, it will take exactly the same amount of time to talk through one idea on each of six slides as it does to discuss six ideas on one slide. In addition, the on-screen changes will add dynamism and visual excitement.

4.2.1. Text slides

- Because presentations often take place in large conference rooms, small type sizes are likely to be illegible to at least some of the audience. Choose:

a minimum of 24-point for **ALL CAPITALS** texts, and at least 32-point for

Capitals and Lower Case – and do not be afraid to use even larger sizes;

- For optimal legibility, select a 'sans serif' typeface such as Arial, in preference to a serif face like Times;
- Limit texts to a maximum of six lines per slide, with individual points covered in a single line, wherever possible;
- Adopt a 'telegram' or 'text message' style, eliminating all unnecessary words;

example

- JOTA brings Scouts together

NOT

- The radio contacts during the Jamboree On The Air directly connect the Scouts and give them the feeling to belong to a world-wide Movement.

- Round off numbers, and use symbols in place of words – e.g. '%', instead of 'percent';
- Include no more than one sub-level to bullet points;

- Incorporate photographs that complement the texts, but ensure that these are also large and clear enough for easy recognition. And when a photograph is included, reduce the volume of text accordingly;
- Bold text carries more weight, so use it for main titles and, where appropriate, to highlight key words (although this can also be done by means of contrasting colours);
- Employ colour with purpose, not as decoration – too many colours are confusing and distracting; and
- Use light-coloured texts against dark backgrounds, rather than vice versa. In a projected slide, white is the brightest colour, followed by yellow, light blue, etc. (Avoid red or green texts against dark backgrounds especially for slides that will be distributed in black/white printed form, as the contrast will be minimal.).

4.2.2. Diagrams and tables

- Keep diagrams simple; eliminate any detail that is not essential in making your point;
- Aim to use not more than four colours per diagram. Present the most important data in the brightest colours, and consistently display related data in the same colour;
- Use a scale along either the horizontal or vertical axis of a graph, bar chart, or column chart instead of numbers at the ends of the bars or columns;
- Do not include footnotes or references (unless you are presenting data that is proprietary to a third party requiring attribution).

Finally, never forget that the best way to be a successful presenter is to:

REHEARSE... REHEARSE... REHEARSE...

5. Audiovisual media

Audiovisual 'publications' on CDs are becoming increasingly popular and are taking over from videotape as the medium of choice for dynamic combinations of speech, video sequences and PowerPoint-type slide presentations. They are inexpensive to reproduce, can incorporate written texts and printable documents, and be circulated in similar ways to conventionally printed literature. They thus form an excellent alternative for information packages that are too large to be sent by email.

CDs, in their turn, will no doubt be superseded by DVD's, as increasing numbers of people become equipped to read the larger capacity disks.

Whichever support is used, professional standards of creation and editing should be employed to produce an end result that can stand alone as a positive endorsement for your work and the JOTA activity.

September 2004.