

To: FRRS Board of Directors
From: Paul Finnegan, Webmaster
Re: Museum Web Page
Date: March 7, 2016

As reported last month, working with Frank Brehm, Eugene Vicknair, Kerry Cochran and Matt Elems, I created a new [Train Sheet archive web page](#). All of the issues that we have PDF files for have now been posted. Eugene reports he has hard copies of the missing issues. He will scan them and forward them to me for posting. I updated the “News” pull-down menu and released the archive page on February 25th. I also continued work on the [Train Sheet Master Index](#). This is an index with links to all the Train Sheet issues that are in the on-line archive. If you visit the page, please note the metrics at the bottom of the page. As of today there are 150 Train Sheets included with 994 topics and 5,064 links.

The “Museum->Museum Rolling Stock” menu entry is a set of pages showing our collection of locomotives, passenger cars, freight cars, etc. Many of the items in our collection (e.g. [WP 805A](#)) have their own “mini” web page. I have enhanced the revision control system I developed for managing our web site to now search the Train Sheet archive and insert links into the collection web pages to the individual Train Sheet articles about the item. The revision control system will automatically update the article links each time the Train Sheet archive is updated.

I added a second new web page under the “News” pull-down menu, “Notes from the webmaster...” I will use this as a place to easily and quickly share information about the web site with the user community.

To get a better understanding of how the web site is being used, on February 15th I installed [Google Analytics](#) on all the WPRM and SN web pages. This free tool provides a very extensive set of reports that can help us understand who is using and how they are using the wplives.org web site. After letting the tool collect user data for a couple weeks I realized the [webcam page](#) is more important than I had realized. The webcams have been down for a long time and the only work I had done on the page was to replace the blank white image with an “Out of Service” message.

It turns out the webcam page is the second most popular “landing page”, that is where users enter the web site. The data from February shows 95.9% of the sessions that start on the webcam page, leave the web site without interacting with any other page. To attempt to capture some of this traffic to explore our web site, I restructured the webcam page to include some of the same material that is on the [home page](#). So now the “Latest Museum News”, some of the announcements and the three red boxes (“*An Unforgettable Family Experience*”, “*Museum Event Calendar*” and “*Operate a REAL Diesel Locomotive*”) are also on the webcam web page. It is important to understand using the file revision control system I have put in place, when any of this material is updated for the home page, it will automatically update the webcam page. So maintenance of the duplicated information comes for free once it is set up.

Speaking of the webcams, Kerry Cochran has provided Kenneth Finnegan a server to replace the dead webcam server at the museum. After rebuilding the software and adding a video capture card, Kenneth is planning on using it to replace the dead server the next time he is on property.

Work also has continued this month to finish up the new and updated material for the Operating Department’s spring [crew training](#). The new sign up tools are being used and I have no reported issues. The reCAPTCHA anti-robot tool has continued to perform flawlessly.

Working with Rick Gruninger and Kerry Cochran, we updated the [RAL page](#) with more information showing when RALs are available for 2016.

I had a phone meeting with Michael Clawson of Big Fish Creations on Wednesday March 2nd to get his input about our web site. He had three major points:

- 1) The importance of the use of Google Analytics. He requested I grant him read/analyze access to our web site's data.
- 2) The importance of developing a mobile device version of the web site.
- 3) We should significantly increase the presence of joining the society on the web site.

For item (1), I granted Michael read/analyze access to the Google Analytics account. (Web tick 2016-0030.) He has confirmed he can view the data and reports.

For item (2), after doing some reading online, I created a pre-alpha/proof-of-concept mobile web page. It was circulated for comment late on March 3rd. It is just the first step on a long journey, but the general consensus seemed to be we are moving in the right direction.

For item (3), Eugene and I have been exchanging emails about paying dues on line. I have developed a prototype web page with on-line due payment options that Eugene and I using to explore ideas. Based on Michael's comments, perhaps we should prioritize and expand the scope of what we were planning. I will be working with Eugene to follow-up on this issue.

-- Appendix --

As an example of the tool's capability, the following picture is from our Google Analytics account for February 15th~28th 2016. It shows where people started and how they navigated through our web site for the first four pages visited. The "/" page is the WPLives.org home page. The number under each web page name is the number of sessions for the given web page. The red down arrows shows people who left the web site after visiting that page. We can glean from this report the places visitors get their first impression of our museum. When logged into the Google Analytics account, the image is very interactive. For example you can track the number of users down any individual path.

