A club website and social media presence can be a valuable marketing tool for your club, provided that you actively maintain and update your website or keep your social media page active.

In this paper I'll try to cover the basics of building and operating a website and also offer some suggestions on how to make good use of Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

**Website Basics**

Although the web has now been around for twenty years, it has evolved considerably, adding support for mobile devices. Websites used to consist of mostly static content – pages that were written as you would create a document in a word processor, but manually uploaded to a web server for others to view.

Due to the complexities of making pages that will display properly on PCs, Macs, small screen mobile devices, iPads and Android tablets, the static approach has largely been replaced with applications called content managers or content management systems.

A content manager allows the user to login to an administration area on their website and create or edit pages directly online. The pages are managed by the content manager, so it can create the website's menu for you. It also handles all the technical details such as detecting which type of device the reader is using, so that the content will look good on both small and large screens.

That's the long way of saying that a modern website content manager will take care of all the nasty programming details so you don't have to learn how to build pages the old fashioned way.

A very popular (and free) content manager is called Wordpress. It is developed and maintained by a large community of dedicated people who decided they wanted a free, open source content manager.

Years ago, content managers were mainly built by large companies, they were proprietary and very expensive. Now, they are largely free and quite easy to use and learn.

Earlier I used the term application. Every website in the world must run on a web server so it can be accessed by the public. A web server is a fancy name for a high-powered computer that sits somewhere in an air-conditioned computer room. Web servers are operated by many hosting companies and all of them charge a monthly or annual fee to store your pages on their server. They also charge you for the bandwidth used when the public views your site.

The web servers are connected to the Internet and they have to pay a provider (such as a phone company or any number of other carriers) for all the data that goes back and forth when someone wants to view a page on your website. Some providers advertise $5/month for web hosting, but after you read the fine print, it almost always turns out to be more like $10 or $20 per month per website. They also provide technical support by email or by phone (although the latter is sometimes not free).
Examples of Torch Club Websites

Two outstanding Torch Club websites.

Both of these sites were designed using Wordpress.

Note that both make use of images and graphics to brighten up the page and clearly state what Torch is and the purpose of their club.

Both have a menu bar that includes pages about the club, contact information and meeting schedule and location.

Both of these sites contain content that must be updated on a regular basis - such as a list of members, meeting schedule and a list of club officers and photos.

To view the Erie website go to: http://www.erietorchclub.com/

To view the Albany site, go to: http://albanytorchclub.org/
**What to Do After Your Website Is Activated or Installed by the Web Provider**

Assuming that you signed up for a Wordpress site, you'll need to make sure that you, or your web designer, installs a couple of add-ons. One will be a theme or template that suits your needs. There are thousands of free themes available that can be installed directly through Wordpress.

**The Importance of Website Security**

To protect your website, you'll need to install a firewall plugin. I like WordFence and strongly recommend it. WordFence is a watchdog for your website. It keeps watch for the common tricks used by hackers to gain control of and exploit websites.

Often the hacker isn't a human being, it's a robot – a program running somewhere in the world that seeks out and attacks random websites. Many of my customers react to this by asking “why would anyone want to hack my little website?” But the bot doesn't know or care what's on the website, they just want IN! When they do get in, they'll install programs that can do malicious things – not to your website, but to other websites. Or they will use it to send spam, or any number of other nefarious activities.

In my former company, whenever we built a website for a customer, we stressed the fact that these days, constant vigilance is required. You can't just put up a website, add a few information pages and then ignore it for six months. Like all software, Wordpress needs to be updated to stay ahead of the hackers. Bugs are always found, no matter who wrote the software or how good they are at writing software. It's just a fact of life now. But in addition to keeping your site in trim, you'll want to keep the content up to date as well. A good website should add new content at least once a month. For a Torch Club, just adding a meeting announcement and the speaker/topic is sufficient to keep your site fresh.

**How to Get Started**

There are many companies that will host Wordpress websites such as iPage. Also your site can be hosted on the same server as the IATC torch.org website. Security monitoring, backups and site updates can also be managed for you, if you wish. A website can be built for your club based on a standard template.

**What Can Social Media Do For You?**

For the uninitiated – Facebook is the most popular social media platform. It's estimated that there are now over 1.79 billion people around the world who are on Facebook. That's a staggering number. An interesting fact is that due to the high level of interconnectivity (friends of friends of friends) Facebook now says that instead of people being separated by six steps from anyone on the planet, that number has dropped to about 3.4.

The purpose of Facebook is to allow people to stay connected with friends, relatives and acquaintances. When you login to Facebook, you'll see what's called the timeline. It's just a running display (most recent first) of all the messages, photos and other stuff that you and your friends put there. Here's an example:

Let's say you take a picture of your grandchild at their birthday party and want to share that with your friends. From your smart phone or a desktop PC, you can click on the camera button and select a photo to
Here’s an example from my Facebook timeline. Messages appear in chronological order with most recent posts at the top.

In this example, I took a photo at our December meeting and posted it live with the title “Carole Levin, speaker at our December Torch Club meeting.” This was seen by all of my friends and friends of friends, because that’s the privacy level I selected:

Below the photo are the names of friends who clicked on the “like” button. They might also click on “share” if they want to make it show up on their timeline (and hence the timelines of all of their friends) or they could also add their own comment to the post.
send to Facebook. You can add a comment about the photo. It'll then show up in your timeline. Assuming that you stay with the default setting of “share with friends,” your photo and comment will show up on the timeline of all of your Facebook friends (and ONLY your friends). This is incredibly powerful.

Everyone on Facebook will have a timeline that looks different. Facebook finds all the content from your friends and displays it just for you. If a friend of yours looks at their timeline, it'll show what their friends post, including your photo. You can also tell Facebook to display something to your friends plus “friends of friends” or even to “public” if you want to.

How does this relate to Torch Club? Let's say that you go to a Torch club meeting and take a photo of the speaker and add the message - “Jane Smith is presenting a paper about X tonight at Torch Club.” Now all of your friends will know this and some might ask “what is Torch Club?” Or if you share it with friends of friends, an even wider audience will see your message. Let's say that you have 50 Facebook friends. Each Facebook user probably has on average 50 friends. Your message about Torch could reach over 2,000 people – for free! If you were to add “want to know about Torch Club? Go to www.torch.org (or your local club's site) and dozens of curious folks could learn about Torch Club, and some might ask about it or how they can attend a meeting.

**Facebook Pages**

Facebook has a simple way of setting up a page for an organization. It's like a mini website that is visible to Facebook users, but also will show up if someone uses Google to search for “torch club.” Facebook pages are completely free and easy to create. You don't need to worry about web hosting, security, updates or anything. Just fill in the blanks (name, location, description of the organization). You can even create events for each meeting and invite people if you want, or you can invite people to view and “like” your page. The beauty of this is that if they click the like or follow button, then whenever you or another club member puts something on your club's Facebook page, all those people will see it, even if they're not one of your Facebook friends.

I've been using this for years to promote our local astronomy club. We announce each meeting on Facebook, along with the program and speaker (see a sample on the next page).

For special meetings where we want to attract new potential members or when we have a special guest speaker, I post the meeting notice and then I use what Facebook calls a *Boost Post*. Boost is paid advertising, but it's extremely affordable. For our astronomy club, I set up the ad by specifying that I want to target Facebook users who live within 25 miles of where we meet, who have an interest in space, science, astronomy (Facebook knows this because they've clicked on other pages related to these topics or have mentioned those keywords in some of their posts). And I also select that I want to target people from 13 to 65+ years old. Facebook will look at those requirements and estimate how many people you're likely to reach for the dollar amount you want to spend. Usually I budget $20 over a two week period prior to the meeting. This usually reaches about 3000 to 4000 people and of those, 60 might engage or express interest or like our page or contact us for more information… or visit our website.

There is no other way to reach that size of audience with such specific demographics for so little money. Your ad won't be displayed to anyone who is not interested in the topic or keywords you give it. Only those who have some interest or are in the right age range or location will see your ad.
Here’s a sample from my astronomy club Facebook page. The photo of the Moon was posted to the club’s Facebook page as a regular message. Note that below the photo there’s a button that says “Boost Post.”

If I were to click on that button, I could create a paid ad, as shown below:

Creating an Ad

I can choose who I want to target, where they live, what their interests are and also their age range.

I can select a desired budget and Facebook will estimate how many people will be reached by the ad.
The Results of a Facebook Campaign

The ad to the left was created on Facebook with a budget of $20 spread over 17 days.

It reached 3,334 people and forty people clicked “like” and 22 shared the announcement on their own timeline.

The orange bar graph below number of people reached shows how many were reached as a regular post (topaz) versus the number reached by boosting the post (orange).
IATC’s LinkedIn Page

LinkedIn is often referred to as the professional’s version of Facebook. The format is very similar, but LinkedIn is geared toward building your professional identity and as a way of staying in touch with colleagues and classmates. It’s also a great place for professional networking, a way to discover professional opportunities and new ventures. Many companies now prefer to review LinkedIn profiles and connections instead of traditional resumés. Even if you are retired or not looking for a job, LinkedIn can be a very powerful networking tool.

LinkedIn Groups provide a place for professionals in the same industry or with similar interests to share content. IATC has created a private group for Torch Club members. The purpose of this group is to network with other members and Torch Clubs, to share news and events, topics of papers and also to share ideas on how to grow or improve your Torch Club.

The other reason to join this group is to show your professional affiliation on your LinkedIn Profile.

To join, search for “Torch Club” or go to https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8476378
Glossary of Terms

Add-on - also known as a plug-in - a component of a content management system that is provided by a third party software developer to add functionality to the content manager.

Bot, robot - a program written by a hacker that attempts to gain access to and compromise your website so it can be turned into another bot, to perform actions for the hacker.

Content manager, content management system - is a computer application that allows publishing, editing, modifying, organizing, deleting, and maintaining content from a central interface. Such systems of content management provide procedures to manage workflow in a collaborative environment (from Wikipedia).

Dynamic web page - one that is stored in a content manager and is created dynamically by the web server when requested by the viewer.

Engage - when using social media to promote your club, engage means to gain visibility, get viewers to react to your post or announcement.

Firewall - software that monitors the content of your website and helps to keep out hackers; also notifies you if it detects suspicious activity.

Follow - on Facebook or other social media services, to follow is to indicate that you like the content provided and wish to see more from that provider. For example, you could follow your favorite sports team, business or other organization so you will receive their announcements and other posts on your timeline.

Hacker - see bot.

Hosting - or web hosting - the activity or business of providing storage space and access for websites.

Like - on Facebook or other social media services, to like is to indicate that you like or enjoy the posted message. Often clicking on like will cause the message to show up in the timelines of you friends.

Plug-in - see add-on.

Static web page - as opposed to a “dynamic” page, the page is stored as an unchanging document on the web server.

Timeline - on social media services, this is a list of posts or messages created by you, your friends or the organizations you follow or like. The timeline is usually displayed in chronological order from newest at the top of the page to oldest.

Theme or template - in Wordpress or a content manager, the theme or template is an add-on that customizes or personalizes the look of the website. Thousands of themes are available for different purposes, such as business websites, non-profit sites, personal pages.

Web server - a larger computer that runs software designed to host or “serve up” web pages and other content.

Wordpress - a popular content management system that runs on a web server.

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