

# ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE CHRS

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT &  
RECOMMENDATIONS 1998-2000

CANADIAN RIVER MANAGEMENT SOCIETY  
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## Vision Statement

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By the year 2001, electronic communications in the CHRS will:

- n reflect the high quality and content of CHRS print media in both official languages
- n present a graphic design standard comparable to other rivers, heritage and environment websites now on the WorldWide Web
- n with print media, provide a cost-effective means of delivering CHRS information to multiple audiences
- n be maintainable in-house through the Secretariat and CHRS partners
- n build an online network of support for CHRS mission and programs

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## Goal and Objectives

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u AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM THAT DELIVERS THE ABOVE VISION ON OR BEFORE THE NEXT CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS CONFERENCE IN MAY, 2001 THROUGH:

- n upgrade and development of the CHRS website ([www.chrs.ca](http://www.chrs.ca))
- n E-mail discussion and circulation lists for the CHRS Board, planners, local river communities and NGO partners, moderated by Secretariat staff
- n Electronic documents archive for internal publications, available either through e-mail in cross-platform format (Word and WordPerfect)

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## Today's Situation

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u SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION (FEBRUARY 1999)

### **CHRS WEBSITE ([WWW.CHRS.CA](http://WWW.CHRS.CA))**

The website is now in its second revision. It has been developed and maintained to date by volunteers at minimal cost to the CHRS. Existing content (primarily fact sheets) has been compiled (from SchoolNet sites &c) and copy-edited in the summer of 1998, with revisions submitted to the volunteer webmaster. Two new volunteer interns in spring 1999 will increase capacity for website development. Current needs identified by Secretariat staff to date include:

#### ***High Priority***

- n Inventory and completion of online fact sheets, with a goal of presenting online versions of all fact sheets currently in print in both official languages
- n scanning and conversion of photos to develop digital image collection

- n thorough proofing and beta-testing of entire site for typographical errors, broken links and overall consistency
- n increased use of graphics, particularly color photographs and fact sheet maps
- n upgrade of site's overall graphic design to reflect look and feel of print media: professionally designed home page (splash screen) and page template(s), probably reorganizing site structure with a menubar (frames not recommended)

### **Medium Priority**

- n addition of hyperlinks to local river homepage(s) where available, and cross-links to each river's English/French fact sheets (language switch now available only at top of site)
- n preparation and posting of recent CHRS newsletters, either as HTML or in PDF format (HTML recommended; see below)

### **Low Priority**

- n preparation and posting of PDF versions of Annual Reports (not recommended at this time; see below)
- n development of electronic versions of other CHRS print media: "Discover Adventure" brochure, "What's In It For the River?" brochure, &c. (low priority)

### **E-MAIL (<STAFF\_NAME>@PCH.GC.CA)**

All CHRS staff now have and use e-mail (Lotus Notes) for internal communications. In the summer of 1998, an e-mailing list was developed and tested for the 1998-99 CHRS Board; a similar list for planners was in process as of August. Results of a survey to the CHRS mailing list have not yet been formally tabulated, but responses suggest that interest in an e-mail version of the CHRS "Heritage Riverscapes" newsletter is low (possibly less than 10%). Results may also prove that the CHRS mailing list has a generally low level of Internet use and facility with electronic documents, though subsets of it may have higher interest (see next section).

Both text documents and graphics were delivered via e-mail in summer 1998. Recipients so far are generally unable to convert documents, which must be prepared by the sender in the requested format. For text, this is most often Word 6.0 for Windows; note that the Secretariat uses WordPerfect, so this involves conversion. Preferred graphics formats are TIFF or EPS for printable graphics (usually the CHRS logo). There has not yet been a demand for WWW graphics in GIF or JPEG format, but such a demand can be expected as CHR communities develop their own websites. There appear to be few cross-platform issues for text documents, as most governments use PCs; however, Macintosh seems to be the preferred platform for desktop publishing, so most graphics need to be delivered in Mac-readable format.

In order to maintain control of use, logos and internal reports should be delivered on request via e-mail from Secretariat staff, and not on demand via the WWW or FTP. *Understanding formats and conversion issues is an essential training need in improving delivery of electronic documents.*

Current needs identified in the summer of 1998 include:

- n Practice e-mail use and develop procedures for Board e-mailing list (National Manager, moderator); note that most communication is currently one-on-one and tailored to individual Board members' needs and information requests. Develop list archiving procedures as Board list changes from year to year.

- n Develop planners' e-mailing list (Senior Planner, moderator) for immediate use in broadcast of Secretariat news and documents to planners. Could be developed into a discussion list or moderated forum as planners identify the need.
- n Tabulate results from spring 1998 survey to document e-mail use level among CHRS mailing list (Marketing and Communications Director, moderator); compile e-mailing list of online users and send initial confirmations.
- n Set up shared address books with the above mailing lists for each member of the Secretariat staff. Designate and train each moderator to maintain their mailing list to prevent duplication and outdated mailings.
- n Survey each list for members' preferred file formats and conversion capacity. Train CHRS staff in file formats and conversion to meet the needs of their list.

### **FTP (FILE TRANSFER PROTOCOL)**

FTP (FTP Explorer/PC to Fetch/Mac) was used successfully to exchange large files (a PowerPoint presentation in process) with the Secretariat in the summer of 1998. This is a comparatively new technology for most CHRS users, and requires at least one of the senders to be familiar with FTP and to have an FTP site available. The CHRS website has the capacity for an FTP site, which could be useful to offsite content developers or consultants to the Secretariat. When more users gain confidence and familiarity with FTP, a limited-access FTP site could be developed for file sharing (ex: among planners, with passwords). However, the file transfer need is currently met for the most part via e-mail, or floppy disks sent via courier. Current need (low):

- n Make passworded FTP site on [www.chrs.ca](http://www.chrs.ca) available to CHRS staff for internal use with web volunteers/consultants; set up shortcut to site on staff computers and develop procedure for changing password (CHRS staff and webmaster)

### **CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

The Secretariat has been fortunate to secure the services of considerable volunteer expertise in developing its website and electronic materials. SchoolNet students and individual web developers (volunteering in their profession) have designed and posted the bulk of the material now online. A graphic design firm, Design 2000, has been very successful in preparing the last four annual reports, and now holds the largest single electronic archive of CHRS materials.

Volunteer resources will increase in 1999. Human Resources Canada has assigned an intern familiar with the CHRS and web design for six weeks from Feb. 15 to March 31 to work on the CHRS Website. Commencing next fiscal year, the Secretariat has been assigned a fulltime student to work for six months on the Website and digital imaging of the slide collection. Finally, volunteer webmaster Godwin Chan has indicated a strong desire to continue his volunteer work with the CHRS program.

Both contract and volunteer partners, however, need content provided by the Secretariat as well as oversight, strategy and supervision in organizing and presenting material. In-house resources of Parks Canada informatics and web design have so far been underutilized, and the resources of other CHRS member agencies unexplored. The next section describes the audiences for CHRS information and the current use of human resources.

## Audiences for Electronic Information

### u DESCRIPTION OF CHRS AUDIENCES AND ELECTRONIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

User Level/ Access to Computers	Frequency of Communication	Primary Content	Preferred Format (estimated; need to survey)
<b>CHRS Board (14)</b>			
Novice to intermediate (all have e-mail, use level varies; little WWW use)	Daily to weekly; twice yearly meetings (internal communication among committees via phone/fax)	Text documents, primarily reports and internal memos; large (100p) agenda books biennially	Word or WordPerfect (PC); most cannot convert documents
<b>CHRS planners (50)</b>			
Novice to advanced (all have e-mail, some have websites; WWW use increasing)	Daily to weekly; annual meetings (high internal communication via phone, fax and e-mail)	Text and formatted documents, primarily reports with tables, graphics and maps; increasing use of presentation graphics has driven requests for electronic logos &c	Word or WordPerfect (as above; some can convert documents); PowerPoint; TIFF and JPEG graphics; some HTML, no PDF yet
<b>Local Heritage Rivers, communities seeking nomination, NGO partners (est. 300)</b>			
Novice to advanced; some very proficient (this group are most regular e-mail users; can be very active WWW users, some web designers)	Per-project basis: weekly/monthly contact with Secretariat, irregularly between communities. Highest need for increased communication with one another (info requests now through Secretariat and planners)	CHRS publications, both fact sheets, brochures and internal reports. Increasing requests for nomination documents and management plans (now available in print only) and for reports with presentation graphics.	Presentation-quality graphics in (print) documents; HTML (WWW) for fact sheets and info. Strongest preferences for immediate info access via WWW or e-mail.
<b>CHRS mailing list (4000); includes all local MLAs and MPs</b>			
Generally novice; less than 10% requested e-mail newsletter	Biennially (newsletters) to annually (Annual Report); conference every 3 years draws 100-200 participants	CHRS Annual Report, newsletters, brochures and fact sheets	Low interest in electronic content as indicated by spring 1998 survey (need to tabulate results)
<b>General public (info requests &amp;c), particularly recreational users and students K-12 and university</b>			
Novice to advanced; some very proficient. This group contains the most regular e-mail users and active WWW users, with some web designers.	One-time to seasonal basis: 1-6 months before planned trip for recreational users 1-3 weeks before school project	CHRS Annual Report, newsletters, brochures and fact sheets; strong interest in any related information (CRCA catalogue, topo maps, third-party books and articles)	HTML (WWW) for fact sheets and info; graphics, maps and hyperlinks to further info. Strong preference for immediate access via WWW or e-mail.

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## Human Resources for CHRS Website

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### uCURRENT HUMAN RESOURCES OPTIONS

CHRS Secretariat	In-House Interns	External Volunteers	Contract Consultants	Member Agencies
<b>Current Use Level</b>				
Medium	Increasing	High	Low	None
<b>Comments</b>				
Relatively low level of experience in electronic communications. Highest potential for administrative vision and direction. Currently unable to meet needs without increased training AND outside support.	One in-house volunteer in 1998 and two more FTEs in spring 1999 have great potential. New volunteers have web experience, but will require direction and supervision as for external volunteers. Student intern may have lowest level of familiarity with CHRS content or internal needs.	SchoolNet and three experienced programmers have provided the backbone of efforts to date in building www.chrs.ca. Very high level of expertise, less familiarity with CHRS content or internal needs. Frequently need more content and direction than has been supplied.	Costs have made use of professional web developers prohibitive. Graphic design firm, Design 2000, has capacity to prepare electronic versions of print publications, but format issues (PDF or HTML?) have delayed this.	Decentralized nature of the CHRS makes the use of non-CPS member agencies complex. Electronic communications experience varies across the spectrum: Grand River has a well-developed website, while most individual rivers barely use e-mail.

uPOTENTIAL HUMAN RESOURCES OPTIONS

CHRS Secretariat	In-House Interns	External Volunteers	Contract Consultants	Member Agencies
<b>Administrative Direction &amp; Supervision</b>				
Required for continuity and overall big picture. Training is essential here to understand the issues involved. Partner with planners and consultants as needed.	Only for specific tasks as assigned by a Secretariat project manager. Experienced intern may play a vital coordinating role for six weeks, but will lose continuity.	Not unless as part of a closely coordinated team responsible for specific tasks assigned by the Secretariat.	Can provide valuable training and technical support to CHRS staff. All consultants should work closely with Secretariat.	Yes, through CHRS Board. Most valuable role for planners as technical assistants to Secretariat in this area.
<b>Text Content</b>				
Focal point for content and consistency. Must familiarize with copyright and fair use issues for electronic use. First step: collect, inventory, and catalogue all existing digital text as for print.	Editing and proofing: should be the core of document conversion, copy editing/proofing, and link testing. Focal point for cataloguing of existing digital text.	Conversion of existing documents (ex: SchoolNet). All content development should be cleared with Secretariat; use in-house CHRS translation except as specifically approved.	High potential for experienced editors to support Secretariat in content development.	Underutilized; consistency an issue. Core suppliers of translation services and individual river content.
<b>Image Content</b>				
Focal point for content and consistency. Must familiarize with copyright and fair use issues for electronic use. First step: collect, inventory, and catalogue existing digital images.	With CPS informatics support, could be the core of digital scanning/ conversion of existing CHRS images. Focal point for cataloguing of existing images.	Potential as source of external images is consistently overestimated (ex: CRCA photo contest). High potential for conversion and color correction, but may incur excess costs.	Professional service bureaus and stock images are beyond the budget at this stage and are not necessary given the large volume of existing CHRS images.	Underutilized; consistency an issue. Core suppliers of river photos; CPS Photo Services is an essential, effectively in-house resource.
<b>Site Architecture and Graphic Design</b>				
Essential that someone familiar with CHRS content AND web design be involved in the next phase of overall site concept and	Not at this stage. Existing interns have been familiar with either CHRS content or web design, but not both; incoming interns	The status quo for the first website. Recommended to be augmented with consultants for the next step—existing volunteers are	Essential that someone familiar with CHRS content AND web design be involved in the next phase of overall site concept and	Planners could and should provide essential input into river-specific needs for site navigation, content, and user access.

structure, which should be reflected in improved graphic design. Team Secretariat staff with an outside consultant familiar with both sides, ex: Design 2000.	have strong potential for coordinating, but will lack continuity.	familiar with either CHRS content or web design, but not both, and none have been professional graphic designers. Experienced current webmasters are an essential member of a site design team, but volunteers may have limited time and resources.	structure, which should be reflected in improved graphic design. Team Secretariat staff with an outside consultant familiar with both sides, ex: Design 2000.	
<b>Site Hosting and Maintenance</b>				
Decision has been made to secure a third-party domain name ( <a href="http://www.chrs.ca">www.chrs.ca</a> ). Do not change it at this stage.	Site access should be routed through CHRS Secretariat for consistency.	Current webmaster needs to train CHRS staff in site access and maintenance procedures.	Site access should be routed through CHRS Secretariat for consistency.	Site access should be routed through CHRS Secretariat for consistency.

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## Recommendations

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### uRECOMMENDED TIMETABLE AND ACTION ITEMS

#### IMMEDIATE TERM (TO MARCH 31, 1999)

- n URGENT: proof existing site text! Contains many typos and broken links. Thoroughly proof and beta-test entire site for errors, broken links and overall consistency.
- n Inventory and post online fact sheets. Goal: present online versions of all fact sheets currently in print in both official languages.
- n Develop new overall site plan to improve organization, graphic design, and navigation: involve Godwin Chan, Design 2000, and Sheena Mason (project coordinator?).
- n Consult with Design 2000 regarding site's overall architecture and graphic design to reflect look and feel of print media. Contract for professionally designed home page (graphic-intensive splash screen) and graphically simple yet striking page template(s), probably reorganizing site structure with a menubar (frames and nonframes versions).
- n Train CHRS Secretariat staff in basic web concepts, file formats and conversion issues, WYSIWYG page editors, and FTP access to update existing site.

#### MEDIUM TERM (APRIL 1-AUGUST 31, 1999)

- n increase use of graphics, particularly color photographs and fact sheet maps.
- n research and integrate individual Heritage River links into existing river pages.

- n Practice e-mail use and develop procedures for Board e-mailing list (National Manager, moderator); note that most communication is currently one-on-one and tailored to individual Board members' needs and information requests. Develop list archiving procedures as Board list changes from year to year.
- n Develop planners' e-mailing list (Senior Planner, moderator) for immediate use in broadcast of Secretariat news and documents to planners. Could be developed into a discussion list or moderated forum as planners identify the need.
- n Tabulate results from spring 1998 survey to document e-mail use level among CHRS mailing list (Marketing and Communications Director, moderator); compile e-mailing list of online users and send initial confirmations.
- n Set up shared address books with the above mailing lists for each member of the Secretariat staff. Designate and train each moderator to maintain their mailing list to prevent duplication and outdated mailings.
- n Survey each audience group for members' preferred file formats and conversion capacity. Continue to train CHRS staff in file formats and conversion to meet the needs of their list.

#### **LONG TERM (SEPTEMBER 1, 1999-MARCH 31, 2000)**

- n Inventory, scan, and convert photos to develop digital image collection, with a goal of one image per river page and a graphic-based introductory section.
- n add hyperlinks to local river homepage(s) where available, and cross-links to each river's English/French fact sheets (language switch now available only at top of site).
- n prepare and post recent CHRS newsletters, either as HTML or in PDF format (HTML recommended).
- n Make passworded FTP site on [www.chrs.ca](http://www.chrs.ca) available to CHRS staff for internal use with web volunteers/consultants; set up shortcut to site on staff computers and develop procedure for changing password (CHRS staff and webmaster).
- n Develop and implement new site plan as outlined above.