



BRISBANE SENIORS ONLINE Inc.

Computing for the over 50s

ABN 33 988 458 051

President's Report to the Annual General Meeting

Fourteen months ago I have never heard of Brisbane Seniors Online. It sounded like an interesting concept, and with a vacancy for the position of President, I interviewed. I must have said something right, because here I am addressing the association.

Membership

Our membership started the year with 564 learners and 170 mentors. The latest figure indicates that there are 430 learners and 133 mentors.

We experienced some good increases in numbers at the start of the year, and this was a positive start to the year. However, then the world met Corona Virus 19 and many things changed in the world. BSOL made the decision to stop mentoring from occurring because it was the safe and sensible thing to do considering the ages and vulnerabilities of our mentors and learners.

The net result was that many learners decided to discontinue their membership. As a result, we were faced with no option but to detach a number of members in the last few months. Emails and letters were sent to those who were due to be detached and we were able to return some of these to the fold.

Hopefully, when the world returns to some form of normality, we will see these learners come back to the fold.

I don't believe that the price increase at the last AGM had any effects on the membership; certainly none that have been brought to my attention.

We saw a few changes in the role of Hub Coordinators. Carol Grimley returned to living in the Northern Suburbs. Gary Alcorn stood aside from the North Hub Coordinator role and allowed Carol to step back in as Coordinator; a role she had held previously. Judith Salvage-Jones retired as Coordinator for South Hub, and was replaced by Linda Daniels. I have yet to meet Linda, but I understand that she is a real dynamo.

North Central Hub has proved a challenge for Hub Liaison Kevin. Throughout the early parts of the year the role switched between himself and a potential candidate. But circumstances changed when Jane Brady joined our association and became the North Central Coordinator.



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In mid-2020 we bade farewell to Peter Henttonen who had been Office Manager since joining the Association in early 2018. Peter did his job well and I appreciated the help he provided during my term as President. His position has been taken by Les Webb who has capably stepped into the role. A number of office staff did not return after the re-opening. The office is now only open on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. This does not appear to have caused any issues. Help is always appreciated at the Office, and anyone wishing to assist is welcome; just call the Office.

Publicity

This year a previous member of the Committee, Dick Bennett, returned to take on the role of Publicity. This was the first time in several years that someone had taken on the specific role of Publicity Officer.

Dick is certainly very enthusiastic and passionate in the role. At the first Committee meeting he presented a number of initiatives that he had for the Committee's consideration. From then on he was full steam ahead in pursuing new advertising sources, and looking to see what sponsorship he could get to help in these advertising goals.

Articles & advertisements started to appear in the Seniors paper, as well as a few local papers. However, with the coronavirus appearing on the scene the major newspaper publisher, News Corp, decided to review its publications and all local papers and Seniors newspaper stopped being hard copies and became Digital only. When trying to get people comfortable with the digital world it is difficult to reach new members when the only way to communicate is digitally.

The loss of the written word will make it a challenge for the future.

A few printed publications still remain in operation and Dick has started communications with these. These publications are primarily suburb area focused. A great coup that Dick has secured is \$10k worth of radio ads to be broadcast during October on radio 4BC. Fifty four (54) ads will run the week before, and the week of Get Online week.

I am certain that Dick will make some more creative inroads for our publicity in the future.



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Information Technology

At the start of the year there was no IT Manager. Paul Boulton had resigned during the previous year and at the commencement of my year not replaced. Instead of putting the burden on one person we decided to run with a small committee to manage the various aspects of our IT.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION SYSTEM (RON HORST & GARY ALCORN)

Last year it was reported that the new Membership Information System [MIS] was underway. Much testing and review was undertaken by Ron and Gary during the year, with input from the Hub Coordinators as they put the system to use. Changes were made following user input.

At the September Committee meeting Ron announced that the MIS was finalised, and was operating as designed. You can tell Ron, he's the one with the grin from ear to ear.

Like any piece of software there are always likely to be 'I need this' to be added to the MIS. The Committee allocated some funds in the 2021 budget for upgrades/modifications to the MIS system.

WEB (COLIN WAUGH)

Just prior to Christmas the website at the time crashed, and was lost from the servers. The technology used to develop that site was old, and we were not aware of any persons who may be able to assist to recover the site.

Paul Boulton had started a WordPress based web site so it was decided to continue along this path. WordPress is a modern and commonly used base for websites. It was also decided that some of the things that were in the old website were unnecessary as the information was available on other websites that users could access. Therefore, the website as presented is very simple and basic.

Visitors to the site can still apply for membership, or to renew their membership. There are also facilities for people to volunteer as mentors or for office type duties. The Calendar system remains and all Hub Coordinators and Committee who need to post events have basic login rights to do this.

Websites are always a work in progress. Contributions to the website, for example with applicable articles, links to items of interest etc. are always welcome.



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FACEBOOK (STEVE DIXON)

The Facebook page has existed for several years, but little was known about its existence. Under the direction of Steve Dixon and Ron Horst as administrators there has been a resurgence in the activity on this social media site. Contributions from other members of BSOL have also been undertaken.

As a result of this effort we have seen a number of enquires for persons to become Mentors.

SERVERS (MAL GAMBLE)

At the start of the year data was kept on a lot of individual Dropbox accounts. These included secretarial, Newsletter, and IT just to mention a few. BSOL had a central server located at the Gabba office that was not being utilised.

The decision was made to get all data centralised onto the Gabba Servers. The project to upgrade and reconfigure the servers was undertaken by Mal Gamble, admirably supported by Gary Alcorn. The result is that the hard drives were replaced, a new backup system incorporated, and new server software added.

The result is that we now have a central location for all of our documents. This will greatly improve our document security in cases where something should fall over.

Mal Gamble has indicated that the system can be a bit slow. He has identified that an upgrade to the NBN should assist to fix this issue. By the time this report is presented the committee should have approved the upgrade to this new technology, with a financial saving to boot.

News and Views

The year started with Lee Ellwood in the role of editor of the News & Views. At the first Committee meeting we received advice that Lee was moving on to other things, and could no longer be the editor of the Newsletter. Lee advised that she had located a replacement editor, in the person of Cathy Bay.

Cathy did a great job as editor. She was ably assisted by Brian Korner who helped with the spelling and final distribution of the newsletter to all members. However, mid 2020 Cathy advised that conflicts with her career and other challenges meant she was unable to continue in role of editor.



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A call for assistance in the Newsletter brought Simon Mooney to the role of editor. Simon will be well known to members both as a mentor and facilitator of the Apple Users Group. Starting with the July issue Simon has put his publishing talents to the fore and is now producing a web-based newsletter that is sent using the Mailchimp delivery system. The new version appears to have been well received.

Corona Virus

There is probably no one in Australia that does not know of the current pandemic sweeping the globe. At the time of writing this report over 37 million people have been diagnosed as infected, and over 1 million have perished. These are terrible statistics.

As a result of the pandemic, and in line with Government recommendations BSOL closed its office and operated through the answering machine for Calls and used the internet to access the servers. The committee also decided to cease all mentoring of learners, and interest group meetings were cancelled.

Now that restrictions have eased some mentoring and interest groups have restarted their work provided that the venues are suitable and distancing requirements are met. During the crisis, some groups [including the Committee] have met through the use of technology such as Zoom. These meeting types have seen increases in attendance, especially with the Mentors group, capably led by Brian Korner as usual.

It is hard to know when normality will return to life as we once knew it. It is possible that it may not. Without trying to sound negative, the return of BSOL to its original models will depend on the development of a suitable vaccine that allows social distancing to be eased. I hope that day is closer than pundits indicate.

Committee

The year started with eight (8) members on the Committee. Sadly, earlier this year Hugh Wiseman advised us that he had developed cancer, and would be unable to undertake his role on the Committee for a period of time as he undertook treatment. A short time later he advised that the cancer had spread, and that he would be resigning from the committee. As many will know, Hugh lost his battle, and passed peacefully from this world on 23rd September. I only knew Hugh through his time on the Committee. I found him to be a proper perfect Englishman. His contribution will be missed.



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I want to thank all of the committee members for their contributions to the association. I also thank them for their patience as they try to help the new boy too understand the animal that is BSOL. Everyone has made useful contributions to my education in one or another.

To those who are returning from the committee my thanks for your assistance. To those who are continuing, thank you for your contributions to the association, and all the very best, especially to Ron Horst, your incoming President.

In Closing

Thank you to all members of the Association with whom I have had contact. Whether the communication has been good or bad, I have learnt something from the encounters.

I am not sure that it is wise to seek a President through advertising, such as what happened in my case. Coming into an organisation without any previous knowledge, especially when the organisation is a Volunteer one, can be a big challenge. It would have been more prudent to seek someone to be Vice President initially with the intent for that person to become President.

I am disappointed, but unfortunately not surprised, that there were no nominations for the Committee from the general membership. The committee needs some refreshing to help keep the good ideas flowing. Eventually the members get tired and they become tired. This then can cause failure to occur.

The association has good purposes and intent as its core. It is a pity that the Corona Virus has been a greater part of this year. It would have been interesting to see the outcomes if it had not come to the fore.

I am not going to be gone forever. I will be doing things to help the Association where I can. I have already discussed some of these with Incoming President Ron. I have some personal health issues, and it is my desire to get these under control. Maybe then I can return to the Committee.

All the best for the coming year to Ron and his committee.

Thank you.