

IGRA Web Site Report

November 9, 2011

At the beginning of 2011 IGRA President Doug Graff kicked off an initiative to “modernize” the IGRA Web site. The goals of the project were:

- Improved interface and look and feel for the casual public visitor
- Modernized technology using a Content Management System
- Long term management strategy
- Collaborative process allowing multiple site contributors
- Create an interactive Web site to allow online feedback and comment
- Tie to Contestant Registration System (DB, PHP), Larry Lindstrom? Password issues
- Create an interactive IGRA Store
- Enhance the Membership/Competitor Database
- Include Facebook/Twitter/RSS integration

The initial project team consisted of the following volunteers: Chuck Browning, Bill Chapman, Doug Graff, Frank Harrell, Karin Jaffie, and Don Harris. A beta test Web site was developed using WordPress, the extremely popular (and free) content management system. This test site was reviewed by the Board of Directors, and after making modifications as requested, the new site went “live” on July 15, 2011.

The following benefits have been realized with the new site:

- **New user interface.** The site look and feel has been updated to a more modern interface. The new front page provides the casual site visitor with a visual “overview” of IGRA using photographs and narrative. This includes a ‘slider’ with images of various aspects of gay rodeo, including rodeo events (bull riding, wild drag, roping, etc.) as well as dance and royalty.
- **All-new event calendar.** The rodeo calendar is now created dynamically based on a database, so the next three events automatically display on the right side of every page on the site. This is fully automated, so that at midnight on Sunday that weekend’s rodeo is removed and the next in the list displays. No administrator intervention is required. Because this is database-driven, site visitors can look at the coming events page (<http://igra.com/rodeo-fans/upcoming-events/>), the 2011 rodeo calendar (<http://igra.com/rodeo-fans/2011-calendar/>), or the 2012 rodeo calendar (<http://igra.com/rodeo-fans/2012-calendar/>). Each rodeo and event has its own unique page and URL that provides a map to the location, as well as standard information about each event. A popular new feature also allows users to add a calendar subscription to their desktop or mobile device, with new events automatically being added to their personal calendar.
- **New Site Structure with Full Site Search.** The redesigned site uses a site structure designed by long-time contestant Chuck Browning, and groups content by the type of visitor. For those who have used the site for years and are having trouble finding information, the search page is accessible from every page on the new site.
- **Dynamic content management and page generation.** WordPress is a free and open source blogging tool and publishing platform powered by PHP and MySQL which we are using as a content management system (CMS) and blogging platform. It has many features including a plug-in architecture and a template system, allowing all the content to be published dynamically and with minimal administration. WordPress is currently the most popular CMS in use on the Internet.
- **Multiple authors.** WordPress’ highly advanced user system allows up to ten levels of users, with different levels having different (and configurable) privileges with regard to publishing, editing, options, and other users. We already have provided access to several of the Executive Board so they can modify the pages. The major benefit is that not everything has to funnel through the Webmaster.

- **Blog Content.** Content that is presented as latest entry first, organized into archives automatically which we use this to present latest news in the Announcements section. We also have a President's Blog.
- **Photo and Video Galleries.** We have an all-new photo and video galleries that are easily and quickly updated using standard plugins. New information can be quickly and easily uploaded to the site by anyone with access rights, thereby distributing the volunteer workload across a broader spectrum of the association.
- **Top Eight results.** This page has been converted to a new Web 2.0 format with a table that is easily sortable and searchable.
- **Comments.** Visitors to our site can leave comments on individual entries and through trackback or pingback can comment on their own site. We can enable or disable comments on a per-post basis.
- **Spam protection.** The new site has very robust tools such as an integrated blacklist and open proxy checker to manage and eliminate comment spam on our site.
- **Full user registration.** WordPress has a built-in user registration system that (if we choose to deploy in the future) can allow people to register and maintain profiles and leave authenticated comments on our site. We can optionally close comments for non-registered users.
- **SEO friendly Web site architecture.** WordPress is extremely SEO (Search Engine Optimization) friendly, and produces a high-quality sitemap for search engines. We have installed site analytics, Google Webmaster tools, and auto-pinging capabilities on the site to improve our results on the major search engines.

Our team has many more plans in the works, including:

- **All-new secure area for the Board of Directors and Trustees.** The existing secure content will be migrated to the new site and will include the following features:
 - The secure site will contain content viewable only by registered site members. This special area will have a registration process that includes each person's name, address, phone, and email. Unlike the current system, registered members will be able to edit their information and change/reset their password.
 - The site content and file downloads will be easily shared and managed among the team members. The graphical interface will provide easy drag-and-drop management as well as file access restrictions based on permissions.
- **Contestant Results Web reporting tool.** This will dynamically report contestant data from the existing MySQL database and will allow for a much wider variety of reports to be offered to the Web site visitors. We are also looking into providing a "year" field to the table structure so that all years can be reported from the master database. This will eliminate the need to develop separate PDF files for each historical year. In addition, contestants would be able to view their IGRA results for their entire rodeo career.
- **IGRA shopping cart.** This will be similar to what is being developed by many of the local associations using OpenCart. This will tie in seamlessly with the WordPress site.
- **Better integration with Social Media.** This includes integrating with our Facebook page(s), Twitter, YouTube, and whatever is the next big thing in social media. We will work in conjunction with the Social Media committee on this effort.

The Web site team is always open to having new members, and we welcome feedback and value constructive criticism. The Web site is a community property of IGRA, and as Web architect look forward to continued collaboration with our members to create the best online presence possible.

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