

# LMSC Communications

## 2010 Annual Report

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Submitted by Betsy Durrant (newsletter editor) and Chris Stevenson (electronic communications)

Open and easy communication between and among members, officers, coaches and club representatives is a high priority in the Virginia LMSC. The following methods of mass communication are facilitated collectively by the Newsletter Editor and the Webmaster:

- Printed monthly newsletter mailed to every registered member (unless s/he requests otherwise and “opts out” of receiving the printed newsletter).
- Monthly electronic mail sent to 2009 and 2010 members using the email marketing company *iContact*. The monthly message includes a link to the electronic version of the printed newsletter.
- Information presented on the LMSC website, [www.vaswim.org](http://www.vaswim.org).
- Through *iContact*, electronic polls of members – or subsets of members – are also possible avenues of communication. One such poll (about technical suits) was administered this year.

### Printed Newsletter (*Wet Gazette*)

A summary of the cost for producing the printed newsletter is given below. The average monthly cost of sending the printed newsletter is \$0.87 per issue per member. The cost of producing the newsletter is predicted to be about \$9000 for 2010. Currently (10/1/10) there are 102 “opt outs” for a net annual savings of about \$700. Currently the cost of producing the newsletter is divided up between the general LMSC membership and VMST club members: two-thirds of the cost (about \$6000) is paid by the LMSC and one-third (about \$3000) is paid by VMST.

	Cost	LMSC Share	VMST Share	Registered	# addresses	# opt outs	Cost/issue	Saved
Jan	\$427.98	\$285.32	\$142.66	457	457	0	\$0.94	\$0.00
Feb	\$473.45	\$315.63	\$157.82	672	672	0	\$0.70	\$0.00
Mar	\$660.14	\$440.09	\$220.05	756	756	0	\$0.87	\$0.00
Apr	\$858.67	\$572.34	\$286.33	818	792	26	\$1.08	\$28.19
May	\$752.41	\$501.61	\$250.80	863	842	21	\$0.89	\$18.77
June	\$778.76	\$519.17	\$259.59	934	909	25	\$0.86	\$21.42
July	\$820.30	\$546.93	\$273.37	1024	991	33	\$0.83	\$27.32
Aug	\$847.97	\$565.31	\$282.66	1057	997	60	\$0.85	\$51.03
Sept	\$818.37	\$545.58	\$272.79	1072	982	90	\$0.83	\$75.00
Oct	\$868.61	\$579.07	\$289.54	1097	995	102	\$0.87	\$89.08
Nov	\$882.17	\$588.11	\$294.06	1116	1010	106	\$0.87	\$92.58
Dec	\$894.14	\$596.09	\$298.05	1132	1024	108	\$0.87	\$94.32
Totals YTD	\$6,438.05	\$4,291.98	\$2,146.07		7,398	255		\$221.72
Totals	\$9,082.97	\$6,055.26	\$3,027.71		10,426	571		\$497.71
Monthly Avg	\$715.34	\$476.89	\$238.45		822		\$0.87	\$87.34

## Electronic Newsletter ([www.icontact.com](http://www.icontact.com))

In March, the LMSC began an account with the email marketing firm *iContact*. The plan we purchased, at \$29/month, allows for a subscription list of up to 2500, of which we currently use a little over than half (1328, or 53% of capacity):

<b>Subscriptions</b>	<b>1328</b>
Bounces	55
Unsubscribes	48
Total Contacts	1431

The plan allows us to send up to 15,000 messages per month. Usually we just send one message per month (less than 10% of allowable); in August we also did a poll of members, bringing us up to almost 20%. We could send many more messages if we wished (this is probably not advisable). The plan with *iContact* includes a number of features that makes managing email communications easier, including contact list management, tracking, and electronic polls.

The contact list consists of 1431 entries: this is comprised of swimmers who were registered in the LMSC *in either 2009 or 2010* and provided an email address during registration. The following table shows the results of the monthly email messages.

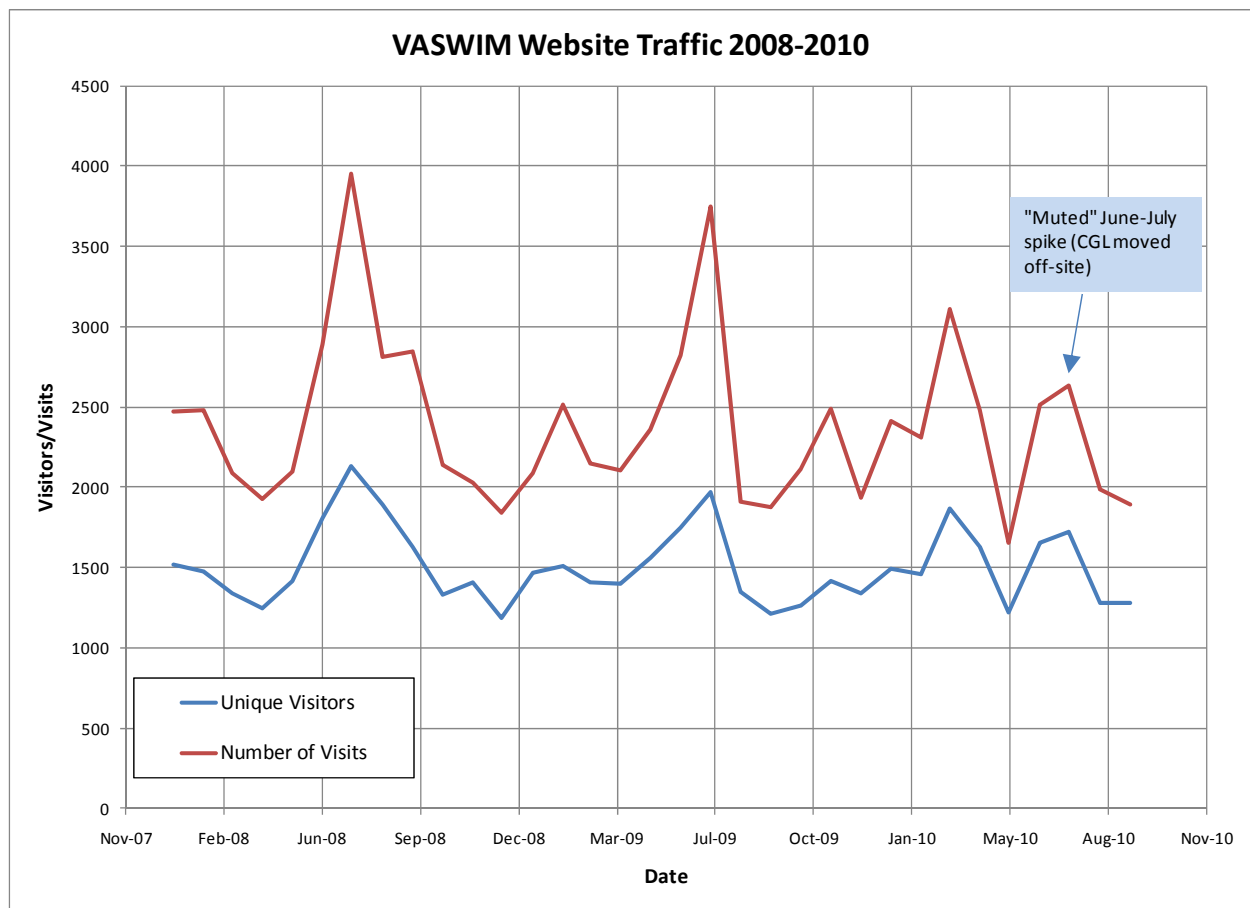
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date Sent</b>	<b>Recipients</b>	<b>Opens</b>	<b>Clicks</b>	<b>Bounces</b>	<b>Unsubscribes</b>
LMSC e-News	3/12/2010	1183	37.3%	11.5%	5.2%	0.9%
LMSC e-News	4/1/2010	1243	38.4%	16.1%	4.0%	0.2%
LMSC e-News	5/4/2010	1252	34.7%	12.8%	4.1%	0.1%
LMSC e-News	6/3/2010	1289	37.3%	14.2%	4.4%	0.1%
LMSC e-News	7/7/2010	1353	28.2%	10.2%	4.7%	0.1%
LMSC e-News	8/4/2010	1340	35.3%	14.4%	1.7%	0.3%
Tech-suit Poll	8/20/2010	1333	38.8%	15.2%	1.6%	0.4%
LMSC e-News	9/5/2010	1338	31.9%	10.4%	2.5%	0.2%
<b>Averages</b>		<b>1291</b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

The “open” rate of 35% is almost identical with that reported for the national email USMS newsletter *Streamlines*.

## LMSC Website ([www.vaswim.org](http://www.vaswim.org))

The previous webmaster stepped down in February and since then there has been a slight reorganization of the website, although the basic look and feel, and navigational tools, remain the same. The following table shows the twelve “top level” pages accessible directly from the home page. They are ranked according to traffic (average monthly views as recorded by AWStats).

Page	URL	Avg Monthly Views in 2010	Content
Home Page	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/">http://www.vaswim.org/</a>	1689	Welcome, What's New, links
Upcoming Events	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/calendar.cgi">http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/calendar.cgi</a>	1040	Calendar of Events (parsed from XML source file)
Swim Rating Calculator	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/rcalc.cgi">http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/rcalc.cgi</a>	592	Swim performance evaluator
Meet Results	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/meet_results.cgi">http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/meet_results.cgi</a>	350	Results DB (can filter by event type and year)
Teams	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/lmsc_teams.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/lmsc_teams.shtml</a>	318	List of teams: location, contact person, URL (if it exists)
Records and Top 10	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/records.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/records.shtml</a>	184	Printable LMSC records, recent LMSC records, CZ Records, recent TT listings
Newsletters	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/newsletters.cgi">http://www.vaswim.org/cgi-bin/newsletters.cgi</a>	175	DB of newsletter links to print (PDF) and eNews
About Us	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/About_LMSC_content.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/About_LMSC_content.shtml</a>	124	LMSC Officers, LMSC Geography
Photos	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/photo.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/photo.shtml</a>	99	Links to photos (most stored off-site), categorized by event
Mythical National Champs	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/mythical.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/mythical.shtml</a>	98	Mythical championship scored using USMS TT times
Forms	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/Forms.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/Forms.shtml</a>	85	Registration for individuals and clubs; transfer form; one-event registration; financial report form for meet directors; info about SWIMMER
LMSC Business	<a href="http://www.vaswim.org/lmsc_business.shtml">http://www.vaswim.org/lmsc_business.shtml</a>	47	By-Laws, meeting minutes, link to GTO and Rule Book, list of LMSC officers



## Observations, Decisions, Future Challenges

1. Currently the electronic newsletter is sent to everyone who is a current (2010) member of the LMSC, as well as 2009 members who have not yet renewed. Should we continue this practice of including previous year's members? There is no extra cost in including the previous members, since we are comfortably below our monthly subscription limits for contacts and messages. There is, however, a cost in time in terms of contact list maintenance.
2. Privacy issues and spam. Does providing an email address constitute an implied willingness to receive email from the LMSC?
3. What is the fair share of print newsletter cost between VMST and the LMSC?
4. Contact management through *iContact* includes club information. Other clubs can use it to send messages or polls specifically to its members, if they wish. Club representatives need to be made aware of this potential resource, since it is already paid for.
5. Between print newsletter, monthly email messages and the website, there are a number of avenues for the flow of information to members. But this is a top-down flow of information; **more attention needs to be made to facilitating bottom-up and peer-to-peer communication** also.
6. **Electronic communications between the Executive Committee between annual meetings.** Email is fine for routine communications but not for actions of the EC that require a vote (even uncontroversial ones). Something is needed that is convenient, private to the Board, and archives decisions for formal approval at the next Board meeting.
7. **We recommend creation of a new LMSC Communications Committee**, consisting of 3 members (newsletter editor and webmaster would be two of them; we propose the vice-chair as the potential third member). Possible responsibilities of the committee are listed below. These do not have to be all done by the Communications Committee; other Committees (Sanctions, Coaches) or LMSC Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair) might share some of these duties.
  - a. Production of a monthly newsletter in print and electronic formats
  - b. Maintenance of the LMSC website
  - c. Production of a monthly electronic message consisting of brief items of interest – particularly those with high internet content – that are not so easily included in the print newsletter.
  - d. Maintenance of contact lists for LMSC clubs and coaches, and making sure that this information as well as practice schedules in USMS Places to Swim.
  - e. Facilitating peer-to-peer and bottom-up communication among LMSC members, and subsets of members (eg within a club or among coaches).
  - f. Ensuring that the LMSC and USMS calendars of events include all events that would interest members of our LMSC, and would increase outside interest in LMSC events.
  - g. Facilitating annual meetings, teleconferences and electronic communications among LMSC Officers, the Executive Committee, and the LMSC Board.