

Present situation of the ICAR site

The present website was developed in 1999, being icar.org one of the first domain to register. Since then, many domains have been registered with similar names. The maintenance of the site has been continuous with every day feeds but we have never been focussed on the graphic elements of the site. Actually, around 5 hours a week are spent in updating it and adding the right information to direct the proper collecting information by the search engines. Actually, the site counts around 1,000 pages containing around 6 links per page. The PDF file count is around 1,800. All this information is the result of the daily maintenance and the accumulation of the information achieved in the last 15 years.

The ICAR web site has a stable number of readers oscillating, in the last 6 months, from 15,000 in April to 20,000 in Feb 2015. The most visited page varies, depending on the situation. In the period March-April, the most visited page was the one announcing the programme for the Pretoria FAO-ICAR Symposium (around 600 visits/month) while in March the most visited page was the one containing the proposed amendments to the Guidelines (around 700 hits); this interest in particular was produced by an email-alert circulated at the beginning of March. The circulation of email alerts is the most useful tool to attract the visits to a certain page. To now, ICAR database counts on around 13.000 accounts that can be filtered to delivery the right information only to interested users.

Over the years, on average, the Guidelines are downloaded on average 500 times/month while the Newsletter receives around 1,000-1,500 hits/per issue, reached in the following 2-3 months from its publication

The software used to manage the site is Adobe based and is well adapted to manage htm files, being a software tool that does not need any knowledge of the html code and allows easy management of the site. It also allows to focus the attention on the contents more than on the style. The limit of the site is that the style was the one designed 16 years ago, making its looks seasoned and not in line with the recent technology. A redesign is a way to make it more modern but I do not expect an increase of the visits. Number of visits to ICAR is highly dependent of the content: an increase of the visitors can not be achieved without the development of further information/documents. Moreover, ICAR users are mainly interested in the facts and the contained information, certainly much, more than on the pictures that may distract the attention.

The implemented software allows us to find files easily, facilitating the user in finding the right page to modify the content. The site is stored locally and only the necessary pages/documents are uploaded when a web connection is available. The main advantage is that updating and management of the site are performed locally, making possible the uploading when web connection is stable. I am making reference to the Meetings when uploading is not always possible due to the weak connection from Convention Centres or Hotels. Being locally, the site is backed up daily and makes possible the recovery of a modified page up to 4 months from its modification

Proposal for the future ICAR site

In case an update of the style of the site is decided, a modern standard CMS software, such as **WordPress**, is suggested, this being the technology tool most used at present. In order to control costs, a template can be identified and possibly adapted to the ICAR needs. Costs for a Template ranges from 50 to 150€ while its graphic customization may be around 500-800€. In case that a deep intervention on the html code is requested, an extra cost of 1000-2000 € can be expected. However it is possible to limit such cost by reaching a balanced compromise among the templates available on the market.

While the new site is under construction, the previous version will be maintained and upgraded and it will be replaced as soon as the new site has been tested and finalised. It is interest of the

Secretariat to finalise the new site as soon as possible, as maintenance of two sites at the same time is onerous.

The use of CMS needs a continuous connection to the web for the maintenance/management of the site, thus making it tricky to work locally and uploading the site in a second phase. This is the main difference and it's a major constraint between working locally with software or working on-remote by CMS. As the CMS technology is based on MySQL or similar databases, once that the new site has been created, it will then be possible in the future to easily migrate to similar solutions or platforms even in the event WordPress would be no more the most common solution, outdated by more efficient software.

The hardest part will be the migration work as we recreate the whole site and I expect to upload around 10 pages a day, considering the necessary involvements in the routine activities of the Secretariat.

The migration can be achieved in around 3 months, being the summer time a slow period for the routine activities of the secretariat, being most of users/manufacturers on holidays.

The expected results is a more modern look of the site, since its content will remain the same of the current version. I do not expect an increase of visits. No particular features can be added to the site since these are already available in the present version. ICAR forum is managed by an external platform, also implemented by Interbull, but the forum is very seldom used by the SCs and WGs. However, specific plug-in and features can be installed on demand. A useful tool can be the adoption of plug-ins that facilitate the creation of photo-galleries. At the moment I do not see specific features that can be implemented in the new site. The restricted pages are managed directly on the server and not within the site. However, as WordPress is extremely popular, I expect to install specific features when the necessity raises.

The proposed structure will mainly recall the present structure, with similar menu and submenus to direct the navigation to specific contents of the site. Each page will also contain descriptors and key-words to allow the most common search engines to index the site, similarly to the pages actually available on the web. Compared to the current version, the new site will be mobile-friendly, in order to respect the last requirements by Google that prioritises such sites in its results.

The style will be neutral in colours with the blue and its shadows being the dominant colour with few/no visual effects for not distracting the attention of the user. Specific template will be discussed with Martin, Brian and team.

Present situation of the ICAR server

Actually, the ICAR server is hosted in a server farm located in Rome, a few kilometres away from the seat at Via Savoia. The proximity allows an easy access to the farm for its maintenance. The server is covered by an assurance for possible crashes that may occur. The last crash, occurred in Jan. 2013, was solved in 24 hours, being migrated on an alternative machine. Consequently, no emails have been lost since this risk can be faced after 48 hours from the crash. This contract assures us until the end of 2015 with a guarantee of technical intervention within 6 hours and the replacement of the malfunction elements while the information is hosted on a temporary machine.

Proposal for the future ICAR site

As the server is now considered old, and rather than having to continue to purchase and write off equipment, we are now proposing to get an agreement with the server farm so that in case of malfunctions the information is hosted on a **private cloud**, provided by the same server farm.

The cost for such service is around 1.000€ to be paid in case such service is requested. The proposed solution makes possible that the emails and the site can return on-line in few hours and be hosted for the time of the repairing. In case of no malfunctions, nothing is due to the server farm.