

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

His Eminence JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of All North America

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNET MINISTRY

2015 Department Report for His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, the Hierarchs of the Archdiocese, the Board of Trustees, and the General Assembly Convening in Boston, Massachusetts, July 2015

Final Draft: May 15, 2015, by Douglas Cramer, Chair

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Internet Ministry has served the online communications needs of the Archdiocese since its creation in 2008, primarily through the witness and resources of the Archdiocese website at Antiochian.org. The Archdiocese website has been in continual operation for 20 years, and has grown in to one of the most popular English-language Orthodox Christian resources available, with a current audience of 100,000 visitors each month, resulting in over a quarter-million monthly pageviews.

The core team of the department has been in place since 2008, and consists of chair and director Douglas Cramer, and editors Virginia Nieuwsma and Andrew Frishman. Technical support has been provided since 2013 by Connecticut's SNP Technologies, and their project lead Michael Brooks.

Our work at the department includes ongoing projects in the areas of: Administration; Design; Editorial; and Technology. Each will be explored in this report. Our vision is for all of this work to be in service of the high calling of the Archdiocese and the witness of the Gospel in the 21st century, under the authority of Christ's servants in North America led by His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph.

Before reviewing our work in the past two years, and our planned work going forward, I offer two quotes from emails we've received from readers.

The first is from a reader named Juliana S., and we received it after launching our new design in February 2015. It reads in part:

"I just wanted to email to congratulate you on the new website design. It's beautiful and easy to navigate. I'm also glad the Discover Orthodox Christianity page was left intact as I feel it is the best page out there for learning about our faith. Our family of nine was received into the Orthodox church five years ago and our journey's beginnings were fueled by what we learned online. I recall spending an entire day almost nonstop reading about Orthodoxy online once I realized it was something that might be of interest to our family. The internet is a very important outreach tool, as I know you already know."

The second is from a reader named Judy Y., and we received it in late 2013. It reads in part:

"I often wonder if our people truly appreciate the Memory Eternal section of the website. How often do we sit in Divine Liturgy and hear the names of the blessed reposed souls remembered and not really pay attention? Our Orthodox faith offers so much. I

remember a parishioner friend saying to me one Sunday, "Isn't it wonderful that John is remembered in every Liturgy?" After four years I go to the Memory Eternal Section regularly just to read his remembrance. I am so very grateful for this beautiful faith we have and all of you in the Archdiocese who make us feel such a vital part. Then I opened the online site for the Archdiocese and saw the beautiful photo and remembrance sent by our Beloved Bishop Basil for Father Anthony Miller. The purpose of this email is just to thank you all again and again. Your work means far more than you may even realize."

What these messages tell me, in part, is that the online role of our Archdiocese is vast, reaching from the first formations of faith and community to our love for our dearest members as they depart. The needs are many and large, and range from the most mundane to the most serious levels of engagement.

MILESTONES: 2013-2015

Before returning to thoughts about our readers, following are some of the highlights in the life of our department since our last report, delivered in Houston, Texas, in 2013.

As for all of us working in the Archdiocese, any list of milestones must begin with the passing of our beloved Metropolitan Philip in March 2014. May his memory be eternal! Over the years, there had been some leadership discussions at the Archdiocese regarding how to prepare for the repose of His Eminence. Still, those weeks were a blur of activity, emotion, and unexpected moments of both sorrow and joy.

On Thursday, March 20, 2014, our website experienced its single

largest day of traffic ever. Our average daily audience has now grown to approximately 3,000 visitors. On the day after the repose of Metropolitan Philip, over 23,000 people visited our website. While the audience began to recede in the following days, the past year has seen higher attention than ever paid online to the life of our Archdiocese. The weeks that followed brought a rush of coverage, as our team pulled together hundreds of articles, thousands of photographs, a live video feed of the Brooklyn services, and more. So many people were involved, it is hard to give thanks. But truly, we as an Archdiocese were all involved.

The next significant milestone for our department came soon, as I was asked to be a member of the official delegation sent by the Archdiocese of North America to the 2014 Antiochian Unity Conference convened by His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, at the Balamand in Lebanon. His Beatitude had identified five key areas of concern that he wanted to see addressed by a gathering of global representation of the Church of Antioch. One of these five areas was Communications, and I was asked to engage on this topic.

The experience of the delegation was both joyful and sorrowful, as I recounted afterwards in my article on the Unity Conference for The Word Magazine. Important work was accomplished, good relationships were nurtured, people stepped forward on all sides, both the hosts in Lebanon and those coming from afar. But the passing of Metropolitan Philip and the 2013 abduction of the Archbishops of Aleppo, including the brother of His Beatitude, as well as the war in Syria, were always in mind. The final, massive, and moving outdoor Patriarchal Liturgy on the grounds of the ancient Balamand, witnessed by busloads of believers streaming in from Lebanon and Syria, and Antiochians from around the world, will long be remembered.

The conclusion of the Unity Conference led to our next milestone. As the tired delegation began leaving Lebanon, the Holy Synod of Antioch met. At this meeting, His Eminence Joseph, then Archbishop of Los Angeles and the West, was chosen to become our Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America. And after having received a late phone call in March from His Grace Bishop Nicholas notifying me of the passing of Metropolitan Philip, I received another late phone call in July the day I returned to the U.S., from Bishop Nicholas, with the joyous news of the beginning of our new era.

We then moved rapidly towards our next milestone, as planning immediately began in earnest for all the required adjustments and announcements, and finally the December 2014 Enthronement of His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph and the lengthy North American visit of His Beatitude Patriarch John X. We had learned much from all the coverage of the passing of Metropolitan Philip in March, and again dozens of key people became involved, hundreds of articles were published, thousands of photos were collected, and more.

Our Archdiocese was given the opportunity during the momentous events of 2014 to witness the Gospel message, and the love and strength of our communities, on a global stage. And from our perspective at the Department of Internet Ministry, she did so in a spirit becoming to her faith and her beloved leaders, from St. Raphael to Metropolitan Philip to Metropolitan Joseph.

One final milestone of note since Houston came in early February 2015, when we launched a major new visual design for the Archdiocese website to much positive feedback. The project had been conceived and begun under the leadership of Metropolitan Philip, and continued in the background during 2014. So it was with

much gratitude that we were able to bring it to fruition as Metropolitan Joseph settled in to his role as our leader, giving us a visual reminder of the changes we had all passed through and the growing importance of the Internet for the Archdiocese in the recording of our history and stories.

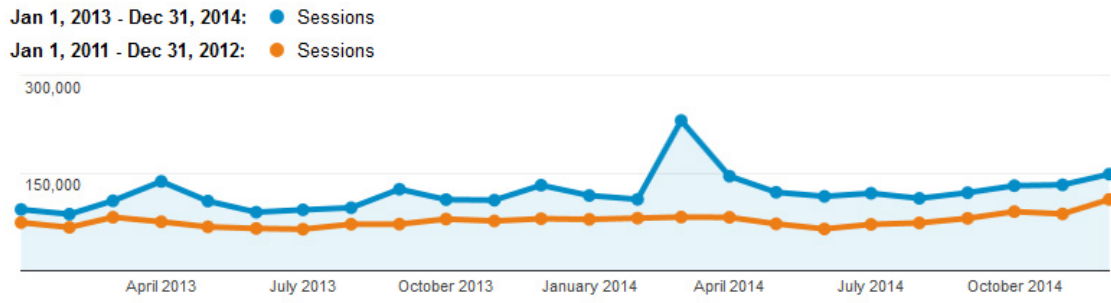
AUDIENCE AND ANALYTICS

To return to our readers, the department uses a number of tools to understand how our resources are being used, and by whom. We continually review a dashboard of various measurements of our website and all of its pages, and the size and nature of our audience. We frequently create special reports for various purposes, from overall reports for leadership to reports on the traffic to particular departments or sections. As will be detailed later, we are working to become more sophisticated in our use of analytical tools to understand and improve what we do.

The numbers tell a general story: While the department has worked for the past 7 years within the scope of a fixed, steady budget, the size of our audience has more than tripled over that time (from 30,000 monthly visitors to over 100,000 monthly visitors), and the number of distinct pages published on the site has increased over 500% (from under 5,000 to over 25,000). During these years, the expectations and sophistication of our audience has continued to increase as well.

Following are a selection of the kinds of analytical reports we are actively reviewing:

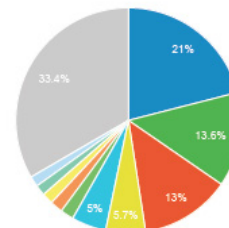
OVERALL SITE TRAFFIC, 2-YEAR PERIOD 2011-12 (RED) VS. 2013-14 (BLUE):



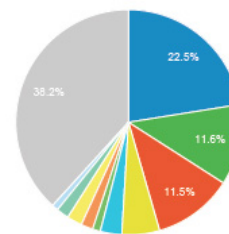
INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE GROWTH, 2012 VS. 2014:

	91.03% 427,001 vs 223,521	91.03% 427,001 vs 223,521
1. ■ Canada		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	89,708	21.01%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	50,224	22.47%
2. ■ Australia		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	58,037	13.59%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	25,920	11.60%
3. ■ United Kingdom		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	55,367	12.97%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	25,664	11.48%
4. ■ Philippines		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	24,283	5.69%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	12,052	5.39%
5. ■ India		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	21,243	4.97%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	6,908	3.09%
6. ■ South Africa		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	8,179	1.92%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	2,500	1.12%
7. ■ Lebanon		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	7,733	1.81%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	3,833	1.71%
8. ■ Greece		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	6,926	1.62%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	4,864	2.18%
9. ■ Germany		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	6,506	1.52%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	4,031	1.80%
10. ■ Netherlands		
Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014	6,440	1.51%
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012	2,044	0.91%

Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014



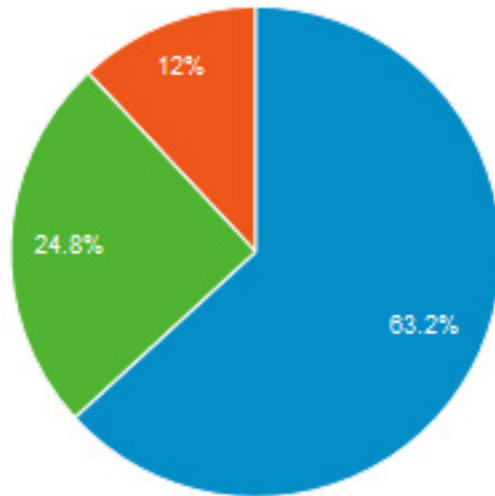
Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012



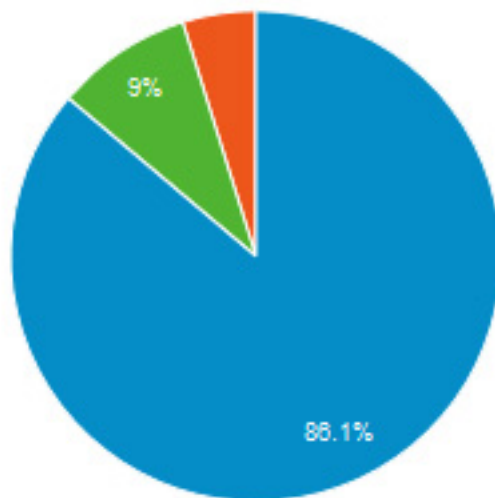
GROWTH IN MOBILE AND TABLET AUDIENCE, 2012 VS. 2014:

■ desktop ■ mobile ■ tablet

Jan 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014



Jan 1, 2012 - Dec 31, 2012



MOST POPULAR ANTIOCHIAN.ORG DESTINATIONS IN 2014:

Page Title ?	Pageviews ? ↓	Unique Pageviews ?
	3,815,531 % of Total: 100.00% (3,815,531)	2,882,702 % of Total: 100.00% (2,882,702)
1. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	682,081 (17.88%)	461,541 (16.01%)
2. Online Liturgical Guide Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	132,597 (3.48%)	82,900 (2.88%)
3. What Orthodox Christians Believe Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	103,102 (2.70%)	52,198 (1.81%)
4. Sacred Music Library Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	74,573 (1.95%)	55,682 (1.93%)
5. Constantine The Great: Roman Emperor, Christian Saint, History's Turning Point Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	63,244 (1.66%)	57,423 (1.99%)
6. Search Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	57,300 (1.50%)	42,841 (1.49%)
7. Parish Directory Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	54,937 (1.44%)	31,207 (1.08%)
8. Discover Orthodox Christianity Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	50,857 (1.33%)	33,387 (1.16%)
9. Orthodox Women Saints Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	50,103 (1.31%)	22,019 (0.76%)
10. Calendar Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	49,125 (1.29%)	36,193 (1.26%)
11. Memory Eternal! His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan Philip (Saliba) Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	44,681 (1.17%)	26,138 (0.91%)
12. Forgiveness and Reconciliation: How to Forgive Others and Receive Forgiveness Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	32,428 (0.85%)	29,675 (1.03%)

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

As was mentioned in the INTRODUCTION above, we categorize our work as Administrative; Design; Editorial; and Technical. In practice, all our days and projects involve some combination of these elements. The section that follows breaks out our existing major projects and initiatives according to these categories.

Each of the projects listed below are in some stage of active engagement. Some are ongoing; some are in early exploration; some are in development or prototype. We expect to be able to

accomplish almost all of these projects within the scope of the existing and scheduled budgetary resources of the department. (Primary exception noted below.)

ADMINISTRATIVE

This area includes all work related to our people and processes, within the department and within the larger group of several dozen key constituents, primarily our collaborators within each Diocese, Department, and Organization of the Archdiocese. We are spread across a continent, and our department uses a number of tools and techniques in order to perform at a high professional level, blending an Orthodox Christian carefulness with current organizational best practices for distributed teams to work effectively.

Leadership Growth

We are working closely with Metropolitan Joseph's selected leadership representatives to review and optimize the oversight of the work of our department. We work with a small group of hierarchs, clergy, and department leadership on our most important decisions. Our goal is to clarify the roles that are needed and how they will be filled, and to identify important people in the Archdiocese and Orthodox world to draw in to these discussions and planning in the future. We also continue to work closely with efforts related to the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

Patriarchal Collaboration

Under the new, dynamic leadership of His Beatitude John X,

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, the Church of Antioch is undergoing a rich increase of its use of contemporary strategic communications approaches and tools. Particularly since our engagement with the broader Church of Antioch at the 2014 Unity Conference in Lebanon, we are actively building the relationships and processes necessary to ally and work more closely with the global Antiochian community. This includes exploration of improved translation, access to ancient and global Antiochian writings and images, and more.

Donations

One of the most powerful and popular uses of modern Internet technology by large religious non-profit organizations is for donations and fundraising. The leadership of our Archdiocese has chosen over the years to emphasize other aspects of Internet ministry, primarily publication, witness, evangelism and teaching. And the questions surrounding strategically effective use of the Internet to raise money are many and large and deserving of patient attention. We are now actively working more closely in this general area, including developing further collaborations with others doing quality online financial projects for the Archdiocese, such as the Department of Conventions and Conference Planning, the Department of Youth, the Antiochian Heritage Foundation, and the Department of Stewardship.

DESIGN

Professional-caliber Internet Design projects address a range of needs. They include foundational decisions and initiatives about how words, pictures, audio, video, and other elements will be combined and presented in order to achieve needed goals. There is

even an emerging field of studies, and new university offerings of M.S. degrees, in what is often called Information Design and Strategy. We have had discussions with people articulating what this field is, and how it will be quantified and certified. It describes some of our work, and includes everything from planning the information architecture of large single websites, to conceiving targeted micro-sites, to drawing on artistic traditions to create compelling graphics and visual presentations.

Parish Websites

Our largest design project, still in its early stages, centers on one key observation: As the Internet becomes more popular and more complex, hundreds of Antiochian parishes across North America are struggling to keep pace and make effective use of these tools to support their local communities and ministries. While this has been true for years, our department believes that affordable and available Internet technology, as well as our own department skills and resources, have now developed sufficiently that we can help address this great need.

Our basic plan is to design the infrastructure necessary to create as many parish websites as might be needed, dozens at first and hundreds as required, according to a template-based approach that would allow for a blend of technical and design oversight from an Archdiocese level and the creation of customized local content from each parish. This same system could also be used to create other required small sites for Archdiocese needs, such as event websites like those needed for the annual Parish Life Conferences. At the time of this report, we are arranging for July 2015 meetings in Boston between senior Archdiocese representation and the leadership of a major Internet technology company with whom we have a strong relationship, who can help us build these sites.

This project is our primary current undertaking that would require an expansion of the financial resources available to us in order to achieve. But we could create something that will greatly simplify and improve the efforts of hundreds of people in churches and communities across North America, while requiring perhaps a 25% growth in department budget.

Social Media

Our department for the past three years has been actively developing a social media presence for the Archdiocese, in addition to our primary website development responsibilities. Social media is an important aspect of Internet communications in 2015, and many organizations comparable to the Antiochian Archdiocese choose to hire Social Media Coordinators in addition to existing Internet Publishing staff. There is much heated debate over the place and even definition of Social Media. But it includes our engagement with large audiences through such tools as Facebook, Instagram, and other ways people today personally publish and share grassroots content including pictures, comments, and more. Our existing Facebook audience is growing rapidly, and we are developing clear ideas on the strengths and weaknesses of the medium, and are now dedicating staff time on a weekly basis to social media work.

Multi-Lingual

Revolutionary improvements in translation software, based on advanced linguistics scholarship and the field of artificial intelligence, is upon us. Having reviewed these developments for 20 years, first from the perspective of magazine publishing, I have to conclude that the era of editorially-acceptable automatic

translation is upon us. We have begun as a department actively exploring tools that will allow for the translation of material in to such languages as Spanish and French. We are in conversation with Internet technology companies doing leading work regarding the more complex translation challenges presented by Arabic, Greek, Russian, Chinese, and more. It is our belief that the time has come for the Archdiocese to actively engage with the possibility of using today's tools to bridge the language barriers currently keeping our resources from large, global audiences.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Audience Measurement, and Audience Growth

A term increasingly used by Internet pioneers is "the experience web." What is usually meant is that that we need to think of each user's "experience" on the web, as much as is under our control or influence, and how we can make it better. How easily can users find us? How many letters do they have to type? How big are the buttons? Do we have the phone number they need that moment, the quote, the explanation? There are several interconnected disciplines we're working in to become more savvy about how to make it easier for people to use the advanced technology at their fingertips to connect with Orthodox Christianity. We are working on reader surveys, keyword identification, Google campaigns, advanced computational and analytical research tools, and many other ways of getting the attention of people on the web.

EDITORIAL

The editorial work of the Department of Internet Ministry is the most familiar and recognizable aspect of our mission, and near and dear to the hearts of our core team, who came out of the traditions

of print book and magazine publications. We have deep skills in author development, headline writing, copyediting and proofreading, photo selection and preparation, and a range of related editorial expertise. Every day, our team is working hard to choose the best possible words and pictures to tell our stories.

Prayer

For years, the most popular content we published on our website included a collection of prayers from our beloved "Little Red Prayer Book." The leadership of our Archdiocese chose in 2012 to remove much of this material. It has now been decided that these valuable resources should be prepared anew for publication, and promoted widely. This project is well along, and we hope to have preliminary sections, pages, and graphics available by the time of the 2015 Boston Convention.

Liturgics

As the analytics above make clear, the most popular content available on our website, after the homepage itself, is the Online Liturgical Guide. It has a monthly audience now above 13,000 visitors. It is the result of a long collaboration between the Department of Internet Ministry and the Department of Liturgics and Translation. This partnership was reinvigorated in one of Metropolitan Philip's final administrative acts, the creation of an Archdiocese Liturgical Committee which took on many challenges. We are far in to prototyping new solutions for the Liturgics team, led by Vicar General and department chair Archpriest Thomas Zain. Our goal is to use this area, critical to His Eminence, as our showcase for our best use of Internet tools for the sake of the Archdiocese.

Archives

Across all of our site-wide projects, one challenge constantly emerges: How to implement this improvement, or address this need, across a collection of words and images and pages as large as ours? It is an archival challenge, akin to those long faced by workers in the library sciences and related fields. We are actively developing a solution which enables us to move forward nimbly with our collection as needed, without losing any important elements of the 20 years of material under our care. Our Archives include pieces such as Memory Eternal obituaries from previous years, old issues of The Word, photo galleries, and so much more. Editorial work is ongoing. Every work day for us includes review, refresh, culling, and considering material that exists on our website, according to our publishing standards. As we address our Archives, we also discover things that are new to us or otherwise worth highlighting again or distributing in other platforms, like Facebook.

TECHNICAL

The technology behind large, dependable websites today is complex, and the achievement of the generation of computer engineers who have brought us the digital revolution. Our department works hard to stay current with and skilled in this rapidly-advancing field. It's moving faster than any of us can hope to keep up with, yet it is also possible to see the forest despite all the trees, and maintain a strong sense of direction and goals and what is possible given our size and talents. We are always open to speaking with Internet experts, particularly those with an Orthodox Christian perspective. Because this is most likely the strangest part of our work, let me pause:

In a recent long meeting with the V.P. of an important American technology company, I heard an interesting comment. After reflecting on the importance to them of having Harvard University as another client, because of their venerability and 400 year history, he stopped and said in essence, "Well, I suppose for you Orthodox Christians though 400 years is a rounding error." This gave me the opportunity to observe that, yes, the Antiochian Archdiocese is part of an organization that has existed long enough, 2000 years, to have among other things questioned and thought through the rollout of the printing press. We preserve a faith founded on even older traditions. We are at the leading edge of such profound questions as: How will ancient communities use modern technology to maintain and further their life?

We have a long history as a Church of understanding our calling and role as centering on communications, on using the craft and tools available in our time to speak and teach and build community. The tools of 2015 can seem daunting, even to the engineers involved in their creation. But who more than us should shoulder the task of using them well?

Core Software Upgrade

The software our team uses daily to maintain Antiochian.org and to create new resources is called Drupal. It is a content management system developed originally 15 years ago by a European engineer, and now in wide use by millions of websites and thousands of organizations that we have observed, including the White House since 2009, Tesla Motors, Warner Records, many hundreds of NGOs, and even an active and growing international community of local churches and ministries. Our department has become skilled, experienced, and involved with Drupal, both as a tool and as a community of users and engineers. We are far along on a major

upgrade of our current Drupal installation and configuration, in order to stay current with security developments, functionality improvements, and other critical elements of the technology. More about Drupal is available on the web at Drupal.com.

Responsive Design

Websites today are built according to an approach called “Responsive Design,” or “Mobile First.” The underlying concept is that the pages that present when you enter a web address in your browser will “respond” to the device you are using. This became important when we all started using “mobile devices,” typically smart-phones, to access the Internet. In our analytics, we have observed the same trend that hundreds of other organizations have seen: People are increasingly using devices other than traditional desktop and laptop computers, with their predictable sizes and capabilities, to access the Internet. Presenting words, images, videos, menus, and so many other complex elements, on so many screen sizes, with some people clicking a mouse and others using their thumb on a screen, requires an advanced set of decisions about the best user interface needed and how to create it.

This is the rough arena of the technology of “Responsive Design,” and in our case it is a software and coding challenge. The design we deployed for Antiochian.org in 2015 – with its new fonts, headers, parchment backgrounds, and related elements – is a stepping-stone to a full responsive design for the Archdiocese. We are at work creating what in our Drupal software is called a “theme layer” (code written in the CSS programming language) that will take our new look and feel, and unite it with the Core Software Upgrade discussed above, to make our articles, photos, and more present as well as possible on the most recent super-computers people are carrying today in their pockets and briefcases.

Image Handling

The final technical project in which we are actively engaged that should be highlighted is our work on images. The Internet is a visual medium, where we place ourselves in front of screens in order to read and view and choose. Everything from the backlight to the resolution of the screens in our lives is under advanced development, and the experience of images in front of our eyes on the screen is beginning to approach the technical heights of great works of art.

We are working as a department to stay current on such areas as font and lettering design, color, and photo editing. We are preparing to take major steps forward in how we organize and present and promote photographs and galleries. There are tens of thousands of images in our archives available for review and enhancement and distribution, and submissions arriving daily. Orthodox Christianity teaches the centrality of the visual representation as a way of supporting the faith, and we are seeking to use images as well as we can in our work.

CONCLUSION

Our conviction as a department of the Archdiocese is that the Internet has become critical to much of our collective work and witness, and deserves careful consideration and review.

Metropolitan Joseph is leading the way for us all, and this lengthy report has been an attempt to present a summation of where we stand and where we are going.

We are far as a society in to the so-called "digital revolution." Many

of us in North America are in front of computer screens of some kind for many hours every day. This is how we read, learn, and correspond. This is even how we see icons of our greatest saints, hear compelling recordings of chants and troparions and hymns, find the phone number of a priest at a moment of need, or otherwise participate in the life of the Church. Our children and grandchildren will likely know screens better than they know books.

The Department of Internet Ministry is a small publishing effort, brought to life in the late years of Metropolitan Philip and supported by Metropolitan Joseph, which is devoted to making the most of the depth of our faith, stories, and tradition in this new media.

We are small still. By comparison, in North America the Mormon community has grown its online witness greatly in recent years. Perhaps our magazine, *The Word*, is small in comparison to *Christianity Today*. Perhaps our online audience is small yet in comparison to *Mormon.org*. But the words and images and resources of our faith, and our Lord and our willingness to support to each other, are all strong. Our department hopes to continue serving the Archdiocese, Metropolitan Joseph, and our entire community through this new form of communications and publishing in the coming years.