**Buckman Bridge
Unitarian Universalist Church**

Journey Satisfaction Survey: Results and Recommendations

Scott Cromar, Journey Editor

Executive Summary

The Journey has undergone a revolutionary change in the past year. We have migrated to a format and a production method that are geared towards electronic devices more than the printed page.

Unfortunately, documents that are designed to be printed on paper tend to be difficult to use on electronic devices, and formats that are geared for electronic devices tend not to print out as nicely on paper.

Given the costs associated with paper distribution, the advantages of a collaborative web-based production process, and the clearly expressed preferences of an overwhelming majority of the congregation, the PR Committee recommends that we focus efforts on the MailChimp-based electronic version of the Journey vs the Microsoft Publisher version of the Journey. The thinking behind these recommendations is laid out in the body of the report, and was broadly accepted by the Board in their February 24, 2015 meeting, based on preliminary survey data.

- **As long as we have a volunteer to perform a MailChimp to Publisher translation, PR will post it on the bbuuc.org web site and send a notification via the Yahoo! group when it is available.**
    - The volunteer would need access to MS Publisher or similar software and the expertise to perform the translation, which limits the volunteer pool.
    - Fortunately, we currently have someone who has volunteered to continue the translation for at least a few months.
    - If the MS Publisher-based version is discontinued, or if a volunteer is unavailable on a particular month, people on the US Mail distribution list can be sent a printout of the web-based version of the Journey.
- **Office assistant time should not be used to perform the translation.**
    - The estimated cost of translating the Journey would be about $500/year of staff time.
    - On question 7 of the February 2015 survey, 11% of Journey subscribers report a preference for a paper-based format. In question 3 of the same survey, 15% of subscribers report that they sometimes read the Journey from a printout.

- **We should not advertise the Publisher-based copy as a service, since it is only available on a volunteer basis.**
    - If people want to subscribe to the Journey, they can be added to the Journey mailing list on MailChimp.
    - For pledging members who need a paper copy due to difficulties with email or Internet access, BBUUC office staff will provide a printout of the Publisher version when available or the MailChimp newsletter when not. Pledging members can request paper delivery by sending an email to admin@bbuuc.org if they do not have good Internet or email access to print their own copy.
- **A limited number of Journey printouts will be available on the Membership table.**
    - Paper printouts of the Journey can also be distributed from a document holder near the office for members who want them.
    - The 2-page "Activities and Events" flyer is arguably a more appropriate handout for visitors than a 12-page newsletter.

History of the Migration

In early 2014, Jeremy Ritzmann and Rich Toupin recommended that the PR Committee study MailChimp as a possible alternative to the then-current Journey distribution and production method. They felt that MailChimp would address shortcomings associated with a format that was geared towards being printed on paper and distributed via the US Mail, with an electronic pdf version that was largely an afterthought.

In the spring of 2014, William Cromar produced the initial proof-of-concept of what the February 2014 Journey would have looked like on MailChimp. This version was distributed to several people inside and outside the Committee in April and May 2014 for comments, and Scott and William Cromar continued development on the template and concept of a MailChimp-based Journey.

In April 2014, Jeremy Ritzmann stepped down from the PR Chair position. At that time, Scott Cromar agreed to take over the PR Committee in May 2014, with the explicit understanding that he would have one year to experiment with a MailChimp-based production and distribution method for the Journey. Scott Cromar, in turn, agreed to track the response of the congregation to the new format through a number of surveys, and to reverse the migration if it proved to be unpopular. An August 2014 survey showed that 85% of the congregation preferred the new format. The February 2015 survey is showing similar levels of support for the new platform.

(During the budget analysis in April 2014, the Finance Committee expressed concern about the cost of sending paper copies of the Journey to people whose affiliation with BBUUC was marginal at best. Finance, PR and the Board President agreed that US Mail-circulated versions of the Journey would only be circulated to people who had both returned a pledge card and who had problems accessing the Journey via email on the Internet.)

The Transformation of the Journey

The Journey has undergone a transformational change in the past year:

The production model has completely changed:

- The old model had a single person pasting emails into a Microsoft Publisher template during the last week of the month.
- The new model involves a web-based collaborative effort throughout the month, where event organizers are able to see the current version of the draft in real time.
- The new model allows a number of volunteers to collaborate as they have time, rather than having a single paid staffer working on a strict production schedule.
- The new model has reduced the error rate in the Journey from an average of 3 errors per month to an average of less than one error per month. 67% of respondents to the February 2015 survey reported a noticeable improvement in the accuracy and quality of information in the Journey.

The distribution model has completely changed:

- **Under the old model**:
  - The MS Publisher format was geared to a paper distribution model via US mail and distribution from the Welcome Table.
  - A pdf designed for an 8.5x11" printed page was distributed via email distribution after being generated from the MS Publisher file.
  - The mailing lists for the US mail and the email distribution list for the Publisher pdf were maintained manually by a paid staffer. Inefficiencies in scrubbing the mailing list led to a situation where the congregation was laying out hundreds of dollars per year in time, printing and postage to send paper copies to dozens of people whose involvement with BBUUC was marginal at best.
- **Under the new model**:
  - The new format is an HTML-based format housed on MailChimp that is geared towards readers using electronic devices.
  - In particular, 43% of Journey readers report that they read the Journey on their cell phones, which was nearly impossible to do with the Publisher pdf.
  - Many of these readers were not previously regular Journey readers. Over the past year, the market penetration for the Journey among voting members has increased from about 30% (per information provided by the previous PR Chair) to about 70% (based on information collected from MailChimp reports).
  - Because the HTML-based version of the Journey allows text to be re-sized on the electronic device of choice, this has made the Journey accessible for people with vision impairments who found the small font size of the Publisher-based Journey to be difficult to read.
  - The MailChimp mailing list for the Journey is largely self-maintained. Individuals can subscribe or unsubscribe themselves automatically on the web. This reduces the overhead of having the office assistant manually maintain the list.

How People Read the Journey

The overwhelming number of people in the February 2015 survey report that they read the Journey on an electronic device. (Since people read the Journey in more than one way, we asked respondents to mark "all that apply.")

- On a computer: 83%
- On a tablet: 38%
- On a smart phone: 43%
- From a printout: 15%

Smart phone use to read the Journey was almost non-existent prior to the cutover in August 2014. A print-ready file designed for an 8.5x11 sheet of paper simply does not display well on a small smart phone screen. Since people can easily zoom the font on their web browser, a web-based format also helps people with impaired vision; the print-based format does not expand smoothly to a readable result.[1]

Because some people do not have reliable email or Internet access, it is important that we continue to provide a paper-based version. In their Feb 24 meeting, the Board decided that it is acceptable to provide a printout of the web-based MailChimp version of the Journey in the absence of a Publisher-based version,[2] and that office assistant resources would not be used to create a customized "translation" of the Journey to Microsoft Publisher format.[3]

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[1] Of the people who reported reading the Journey primarily on electronic devices, only one respondent replied that he or she did not like how it displayed on the screen. This person also replied that he or she did not like the pictures or graphics used in the Journey, so that may be the reason for the objection.

[2] A typical web-based Journey may print out to 22 pages due to the extra white space and the fact that people set the font sizes on their web browsers larger than are configured on our MS Publisher template. The same Journey would print out to 12 pages after the translation. The ink cost is probably similar, since most of the difference is white space, but paper and postage costs would be higher for the printout of the web-based version.

[3] The volunteers from PR who have done the translation report that it takes between 3 and 4 hours per month to "translate" the Journey from MailChimp format to Microsoft Publisher format. Depending on whether we believe the office assistant would be faster or slower than the PR volunteers, this would work out to $400-$500 of office assistant time over the course of the year.

Journey Satisfaction Survey Results, 8 March 2015

Popular Articles

The February 2015 survey gathered information about the types of articles people find interesting. These are sorted below by the level of interest in each type of story. Since the percentages may change slightly by late-arriving responses to the survey, here is the link to look at the current results: **https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-D9G7SVY7/**

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
Activities and Events at BBUUC	85%	13%	0%	0%	3%
Descriptions of Coming Services	69%	23%	5%	0%	3%
Stories and Profiles about Church Members	56%	22%	19%	0%	3%
Columns from Church Leaders	49%	23%	21%	8%	0%
News Stories about the Governance of BBUUC	41%	31%	23%	3%	3%
News Stories about Past Activities at BBUUC	34%	18%	37%	5%	5%
News from the Cluster, Region or UUA	28%	18%	26%	21%	8%
Activities at Nearby UU Congregations	28%	36%	28%	3%	5%

Based on several comments from people about the popularity of the articles about Activities and Events, PR began producing a 2-page "Activities and Events" flyer each month that can be distributed in the OOS on the last Sunday of the month, or handed to visitors throughout the month. This flyer is popular with some people, and not as popular with others, but it helps cut down on the cost of producing the same announcements in the OOS each week.

Complaints about the Journey

Our surveys have revealed some complaints about the Journey aside from complaints by people who prefer a paper-centered format:

Spam Filter Settings

Some people have complained that they are not receiving email from MailChimp. PR has verified that the email is leaving MailChimp and arriving at the target mail server. We believe that the issue is that the recipients have their spam filter settings mis-configured, either to exclude mail from bulk email providers like MailChimp or not to allow email from pr_communications@bbuuc.org. Aside from recommending to people that they change their spam filter settings, there is nothing that PR can do to address this issue. These settings are between individuals and their email service provider.

(For the time being, we have added these individuals to the US Mail distribution list while they work out their problem with their email provider. These individuals can also subscribe to one of the Social Media

outlets used to publish the Journey link in addition to the bulk email: the Yahoo! email list, the Facebook group, the public Facebook page, or the Twitter feed.)

This issue has nothing to do with format, despite persistent statements to the contrary by some of the individuals involved. We have no reason to expect that migrating the Journey distribution to a different bulk email provider would change the result, especially since we have already provided electronic certificates to MailChimp so that our emails from MailChimp are considered "verified" email. Having the office assistant maintain a list of such people and manually send non-bulk email to them, would be another possible resolution, but would be a manual process. PR is not prepared to take on the task of manually sending emails to people and believes that the proper resolution is between the person and their email provider.

Journey Length

Several people have complained that the Journey is "too long." When they are questioned further, their objection appears to be to the number of articles covered in the Journey. In particular, some people interviewed by PR about this issue report that they don't like the following types of articles:

- News or governance articles about the UUA, region or cluster.
- News articles about governance topics at BBUUC.
- Columns by BBUUC leaders.

Since BBUUC governance articles and communications from BBUUC leadership are defined in the PR P&Ps as a reason for the existence of the Journey in the first place, those are not candidates for removal. The articles about the UUA and nearby congregations were added as a result of several requests from Board and Council members, and appear to be popular among several of our readers.

We have made a concerted attempt to reduce the length of individual articles in the Journey, and to provide background information by inserting hyperlinks in the article. **NOTE:** *This is a technological fix that is not available in the paper-based Journey, and these hyperlinks represent important content that does not translate to the Publisher-based paper version*. 91% of respondents to the February 2015 survey report that they at least sometimes follow these hyperlinks to drill down for additional information.

Other than that, we have suggested to people that they are free to scroll or page past any articles that are not interesting to them.