

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH  
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**FREEMASONS AND THE COMMUNICATION AGE.**

by:

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Alvin Toffler, author of the "Third Wave" predicted that the age of communication would descend on this world with a rush like we have never seen before. He suggested that the Third Wave had already begun in 1980 when he wrote his book. He said that unlike the First Wave of agriculture that lasted for ten thousand years and the Second wave of the Industrial Revolution that has lasted barely 250 years; the Third or Communication wave would crash upon us for no more than fifty years.

People give their loyalty to the things they understand the best. Mr. Toffler suggests that each wave is unstoppable and that those with loyalties given to the preceding wave will be left behind or at worse perish and be forgotten in the residue left in the wake of the future.

Masonry can not and must not be allowed to rest on its laurels from the past. As Masons we have an obligation to embrace the future; for our fraternity, our sons and our future Brethren. Our message, if it be one that we believe in must be made available in the medium of our time.

Nothing will ever take the place of our Lodges or the rituals that take place in them, but we must expose who we are, what we stand for, and where we can be found on the information highways of today. The man of tomorrow's generation is found in front of a computer accessing Computer Bulletin Boards, Internet, and other electronic Networks across the world. He does it in a compressed time frame and at speeds that boggle the mind. These men are able to selectively absorb information from this electronic medium. This new information age trait allows them to skim vast amounts of information at an astonishing rate. If we are to grab the interest of these men, if we are to get them into our Lodges, we must have our best men presenting the face of Masonry on these electronic highways.

As I look around this room tonight, I see many brethren who are well qualified to represent Freemasonry on this new communication highway. Yes. Many of you, although in the senior years of your life and possibly inclined to embrace the preceding age, are the cream of Masonry. The new generation of men who will make up our Lodges of the future will learn best what Masonry is by being touched by the circle of your influence. You have much to contribute to the new age and I ask, - no, I entreat you to throw down your complacency and join me in sharing our message with those men who will pick up the Standard of Masonry that we must bequeath to them.

To do this, men of your caliber need to join the new communication age. We need you to become conversant with the new technology. We need you to join the "Net", sharing fellowship with other Net Brethren already there and the lay men who are frequenting Masonic areas of the Net. These men are incredibly curious about us and what we stand for. It is critical that we have representation that can

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answer their questions and show by example the tenants of Masonry.

I am here tonight to share with you part of this new Communication Wave. I am the System Operator of the Victoria Masonic Computer Bulletin Board System. This is basically a computer that runs an electronic mail and file program. It allows people to access this system via ordinary telephone lines using a modem and computer in the comfort of their own home 24 hrs a day, seven days a week..

Electronic mail allows people to read, send, and share messages locally and across the world. As an example, you could use the "Local Masonic Conference" to share mail between yourself and other executive members of your Lodge - - - or if GL was accessing the Board, they and Lodge Secretaries could transfer mail between each other. These are just a few of the dozens of uses for the electronic mail areas of the Board.

Many of the current mail areas on the Board are dedicated to specific Masonic subjects like the Blue Lodge, The Shrine, or Eastern Star. These message areas generate in depth discussion on many of the issues each of these Masonic bodies face in today's world. Much of the mail traffic is little more than plain old fellowship between Brethren who have discovered new Masonic friends on the Net. Masonic Bulletin Boards have been called the Lodges that never close, and fellowship is of course, one of the most important elements of our Lodges. It's through these kind of messages that the public truly gets to see what Masonry is all about. Many times I have seen replies from lay people who can't seem to understand the special closeness of the messages exchanged between Brethren. Although they don't understand this closeness, they do recognize it and it is through this recognition that causes many of them to explore Masonry in greater depth.

The file area is the heart of the BBS, especially for the Victoria Masonic BBS. This is because we carry three main Masonic file areas. These are the Speculative files, Masonic Graphic files and Masonic periodically files.

The Speculative area includes hundreds of articles and papers on all aspects of Masonic subjects, including the papers of this, the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research. You can search this file area by title, subject, author, or "key" word (some specific word that may be part of a particular subject) . The Board will list all files found with the particular search pattern you use. These files can be "downloaded" to your own computer and used or read at your leisure.

As you have probably already realized, this file area is or can be an incredible resource for research on those new articles that I know so many of you here are writing. It is also a library for those completed articles This will allow others to readily access your thoughts and ideas expressed in those articles. It is the new essence of "spreading light" in the electronic ..... one of the main objectives, I believe of the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research.

The Masonic Graphics file area has hundreds of Masonic graphics in all the most common graphic formats. These graphics can be used by anyone to dress up articles, papers, newsletters, posters, and bulletins.

The third Masonic file area is the Masonic Periodical file area. Here you can find copies of such well know Masonic Periodicals as "The Short Talk Bulletins" or the "Scottish Rite Journals ". This area is also a wealth of information for research minded Brethren.

Last, but not least, is the CD-ROM file area of the board. There is more than 700 meg of shareware on a multitude of general computer- topics including

Windows programs.

The first and foremost goal of the Victoria Masonic BBS is the spreading of light and as a repository for Masonic Speculative information. The second goal is to provide a medium for electronic  
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fellowship. During the last year and a half, the Board has made great strides in both of these objectives. Much is yet to be done. There are great challenges ahead. For example, the Board could be the repository for British Columbia Masonic World Wide Web Internet Access. Many Masonic organizations like the Southern Calif. Lodge of Research are already there. It could also offer 800 service for free calling from the rest of BC, a certain benefit for the all of the BC Masonic Community and of course there is the always the cost of the present day to day operation of the Board.

Masonry in this Province started right here in Victoria. We have always been leaders in the Provincial Masonic Community. We have an opportunity to continue this reputation. Through the Board, Victoria is already known for being on the leading edge of the Masonic Electronic Communication Age. We can continue to lead through example. I hope you will join me through participation and support to continue to make the VM BBS a dynamic and growing service for Freemasons in this new age of Communication.

At this time I will provide a live demonstration of the Victoria Masonic Bulletin Board. (Working demo of the BBS took place for approx. 30 mins)

The possibilities of the distribution of Masonic educational material is unlimited through this BBS. This system is virtually a custom library of Freemasonry just a phone call away. The material is secure because the Board all Users when they logon. I hope you will avail yourself of this resource. Thank you for the opportunity of presenting this information.  
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