

## **Bridge in the Press and on the Internet**

My aim in this presentation is to show how the presentation of bridge in the Press and on the Internet can attract and develop interest in the various aspects of the game and be beneficial to Bridge Federations.

I'll start by looking at the printed word.

### **Bridge Magazines**

Fuelled by the huge interest in bridge generated by Ely Culbertson, Bridge Magazines started to appear in the 1920's, with *Bridge Magazine* soon followed by *The Bridge World*. These early magazines had a considerable following and were able to secure significant levels of advertising from major companies of the time.

Bridge Magazine was supported by famous companies, The London & North Eastern Railway, Perrier-Jouet, Benedictine, Waddingtons, St.Hilaire Champagne (a dozen bottles of the 1911 - a great vintage - would have cost you only 10 Euros!) Jaeger, The Waldorf Astoria and many more.

Were any modern day magazine to secure a massive circulation then they could expect to secure significant advertising revenue.

To give you an indication as to what a commercial company thinks is a significant number of subscribers, *Chess & Bridge* (the owners of Bridge Magazine) are aiming to have a subscription/readership base of 100,000 by 2020.

Bridge Magazine currently offers free advertising to the EBL, the WBF and the EBU for the promotion of their events, and to the organisers of major Bridge Festivals around the world.

They are also promoting a scheme that is designed to increase subscribers and produce revenue for individual Bridge Federations.

I asked the English Bridge Union to give me the latest figures for their magazine, and they kindly provided the following information:

In 2015 the average number of people being sent a printed copy of each issue of the EBU magazine – English Bridge – was around 40,100. The exact figure per issue varies depending on how many people are eligible to receive each issue - based on their Magazine Points - and on direct and student memberships being started, renewed or expiring. There is a fluctuation of up to +/- 400 copies per issue.

There are around 3,200 members who have specifically opted not to be sent a printed copy of the magazine (though not all of these would be eligible to receive one) – members are sent a printed copy unless they choose otherwise.

Nearly all issues of the online version of the magazine have received 2,000 – 2,500 visits, and around 40-45,000 page views (though a few received more – one has received 4,500 visits with nearly 100,000 page views). These figures may include visits from both those who have opted not to receive a printed copy, and those getting a printed copy.

We should not forget other major publications such as Le Bridgeur, Bridge d'Italia and Poland's Brydź.

You will find others mentioned at:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_bridge\\_magazines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_bridge_magazines)

but this list is far from comprehensive.

### **Newspapers**

In the United Kingdom and the USA, the major newspapers, such as *The Times* & the *Daily Telegraph* carry bridge columns, some of them on a daily basis. Others have a column in their online editions.

These keep bridge in the public eye (to a limited degree) and provide an opportunity for the promotion of tournaments and bridge related products.

However, it is not so easy to maintain these columns. Last year the New York Times dropped its column, which had been running for 80 years.

I would suggest that every Federation tries to ensure that the major newspapers in their country carry bridge columns.

### **Bridge on the Internet**

Bridge is ideally suited to the Internet.

Before we consider how we can utilise the power of the Internet I would like to show you one of the best of the commercial sites for Chess, [www.Chessbase.com](http://www.Chessbase.com).

Chessbase is a major player in the chess world, producing a database that every serious and many semi serious players must have. It also produces educational software on a massive scale.

Their website is a 24/7 news feed for Chess, with reports on major (and minor) tournaments, product reviews, articles and much more.

Turing back to bridge, you will probably be aware of the most important sites outside of those maintained by the EBL and the WBF.

For bridge watching and online play, Bridgebase is 'primus inter pares'.

Big matches can attract huge numbers - the last session of the 2003 Bermuda Bowl in Monaco between Italy and the USA attracted 6,729 spectators (and thousands more were unable to watch because of server limitations which no longer exist) I have not checked exhaustively, but I imagine that every Federation maintains its own web site.

I asked some organisations to supply information about the number of visitors to their sites.

In December 2015 the EBU website had around 105,000 visitors, generating around 370,000 page views.

The web site Bridgewinners which has become very prominent in recent months has approximately 50,000 signed up members. Their traffic ranges from 5500-15000 unique visitors per day depending on if there are big tournaments going on. They spiked to more like 20-30,000 per day during the cheating scandals.

Their growth curve is pretty consistent, at least doubling year over year for the past 6-7 years since they started. Users average 8 minutes per visit. They have over 10,000 bridge problems posted by their users and likely as many regular articles. These are rough numbers as they rely on observations of Google analytics and not internal calculations.

(These numbers are not supposed to be in the public domain and Bridgewinners request that they are kept confidential outside of this presentation.)

### **Power of the Internet**

We are living in the Internet age. Entire industries, such as travel agencies and video rental stores have disappeared. Traditional publishing, books, newspapers, encyclopaedias and music, have lost power, while Amazon and others have gained. Advertising-based companies like Google and Facebook have gained a lot of power.

While the Internet will not necessarily increase the bridge playing population, it can be a highly efficient tool for promotion and marketing.

If you want to attract bridge players to an event, then having a web site that becomes celebrated for supplying totally up to date information on a daily basis, informative articles, video presentations and so on and which will automatically feature information about upcoming events is probably the way to go.

Just imagine a site that becomes as well known and prestigious as Chessbase.