

Meeting Notes
RAC Website Working Group
Monday, August 27, 2018
9:00-10:00 a.m. (EST)

Participants: Terry Swygert, Allison Hardt, Reneé McHenry, Mike Sock, Beth Klemann, Natassja Linzau

1. Review and approval/disapproval of June 25, 2018, meeting notes. The meeting notes were approved by Allison and Terry. **Natassja** will post them on the website.

2. Welcome new Website Working Group members. We want to extend a special welcome to Terry Swygert and Neil Mastin, our newest members of the Website Working Group.

3. Discussion of an Index, Categories Page, or Site Map for website content.

During our meeting in June, Beth suggested that we create an “Index” or “Catalogue” page that could list website content by category and/or alphabetically. Some of the items that should be listed include: Task Force products; governance documents (Operating Guidelines, Website Governance Document, etc.); Acronyms list.

Beth said that we have so much stuff on the website, but we don’t have a way to find things easily. Allison said it would be helpful to list the Task Force Products because it’s difficult to remember which task force produced them . Reneé suggested that it could be presented as an “A-Z list”. Beth suggested that we conduct a RAC Survey to ask members what items they have difficulty finding on the website, and then we can develop a list of items for the Index from the results of the survey.

Natassja and Beth will work on conducting a survey of RAC members for this purpose.

4. RAC Surveys Categories/Taxonomy—Reneé McHenry is willing to help with the re-categorization of our RAC surveys. She joined our call to discuss next steps.

Reneé said that there are three RAC web assets that have different taxonomies: RAC Surveys Categories, the High Value Research Website Topics, and the RPPM website. It would be a good idea if we could use terms consistently across the three websites.

Reneé suggested using an existing taxonomy, such as the Transportation Research Thesaurus (TRT). Another shorter list that is a possibility is the TRB Subject Categories. Beth suggested that we could have a “Master List” of terms that could be used, recognizing that not everyone would use every term. Reneé wondered if the searches that are done on the RAC Surveys database are primarily done using the keyword search option or the dropdown list of categories. For the RAC Surveys database, Reneé said she tends to use both the dropdown list of Categories and the search function as a way of narrowing search results.

Because the TRT is tiered, Beth asked how many “big buckets” of search terms exist in the TRT. **Reneé** said she would look into that and provide more information at our next meeting. Reneé also suggested that broader categories are better and we should tend towards that, but our goal will be to get to the right level of detail vs. breadth.

UPDATE: Renéé provided the following information about the TRT and the TRB Subject Categories: The TRT categories are too broad, so they will not be helpful. The TRB Subject Categories should work better for our purposes.

Transportation Research Thesaurus Categories:

A: Transportation
B: Transportation operations
C: Management and organization
D: Communication and control
E: Planning and design
F: Construction and maintenance
G: Testing
H: Safety and security
J: Environment
K: Economic and social factors
M: Persons and personal characteristics
N: Organizations
P: Facilities
Q: Vehicles and equipment
R: Materials
S: Physical phenomena
T: Disciplines
U: Mathematics
V: Areas and regions
W: Time
X: Information organization

TRB Subject Categories List:

Administration and Management
Aviation
Bridges and other structures
Construction
Data and Information Technology
Design
Economics
Education and Training
Energy
Environment
Finance
Freight Transportation
Geotechnology
Highways
History
Hydraulics and Hydrology
Law
Maintenance and Preservation
Marine Transportation

Materials
 Motor Carriers
 Operations and Traffic Management
 Passenger Transportation
 Pavements
 Pedestrians and Bicyclists
 Pipelines
 Planning and Forecasting
 Policy
 Public Transportation
 Railroads
 Research
 Safety and Human Factors
 Security and Emergencies
 Society
 Terminals and Facilities
 Transportation (General)
 Vehicles and Equipment

5. Inclusion of TRANLIB surveys with RAC Surveys—Reneé McHenry emailed us to ask if we might be able to post TRANLIB surveys of state DOTs on the R&I/RAC website.

Here is an excerpt from her email: “Every once in a while, a state DOT librarian sends an inquiry to TRANLIB asking what other states are doing regarding a particular issue/process. Maybe they don’t have access to the RAC list through the Research Administrator?”

When these surveys are compiled, there’s no place to put them. They are sometimes re-posted to TRANLIB. I realize these are more state DOT surveys than strictly RAC surveys. But it amounts to the same thing in the end.”

Discussion: Right now, the issue is that there are TRANLIB surveys being conducted but there is no place to put the results. Reneé was not sure how many surveys are being conducted on a monthly basis. Allison was all for it, because she said the value of those survey results to the states would make it worth the effort to get them posted. Allison also said that she sends out surveys to AASHTO committees occasionally, but there is nowhere to put those results either. It would be nice to post them all in one place.

Beth’s biggest concern is if it becomes very successful and requires a lot of maintenance. Reneé also said she wonders if the TRANLIB surveys may go beyond research and not be as relevant to this group. Plus, there would be effort required on her part to follow-up with individuals who send out surveys on the TRANLIB list to make sure that they submit their results to be posted. Natassja mentioned that she uses a “Pending Surveys Spreadsheet” to track when surveys go out and that is a way for states to check and see if they sent a survey out and have not yet provided results; some states use it frequently, but there are a lot of states that do not send their survey results to get posted. The spreadsheet has to be updated manually so it involves a lot of effort on Natassja’s part. Natassja suggested that Reneé could use a similar tool to track TRANLIB surveys.

Reneé said it’s a “lost opportunity” if there is no way to capture the survey results, and Allison said it was particularly important for states that don’t have a librarian. The group decided to go ahead and post the

surveys from TRANLIB on the website on a trial basis. **Natassja will work with Reneé** to establish a process so that it's organized and results are submitted in an appropriate format so it is easy for Natassja to add them to the surveys database.

6. FAQ Page Analytics. Natassja showed the group the in-page analytics for the past 6 months. There was a very small percentage of people clicking on a few of the links, but this further underscored the importance of finding a different way to present easy access to items on the website.

Summary of Action Items

1. Natassja will post meeting notes from June.
2. Beth and Natassja will work together on conducting a survey of RAC members to see what content on the R&I/RAC website people have difficulty finding.
3. Reneé will research the potential categories we could use for surveys, comparing the TRB subject categories and the terms used in the TRT.
4. Reneé and Natassja will work to develop a procedure for the submission of TRANLIB survey results so that Natassja can put them into the RAC Surveys database.

ADJOURNED. Next meeting will occur on **Monday, September 24, 2018, from 9:00 to 10:00am Eastern, via Zoom.**